



MFN  
1259

Śrimate Rāmānujāya Namaḥ :

17953

# Studies in Rāmānuja

*Papers presented at*

THE FIRST ALL INDIA SEMINAR ON  
ŚRĪ RĀMĀNUJA AND HIS SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY  
AT ŚRĪPERUMBŪDŪR

*on 21st and 22nd July 1979.*

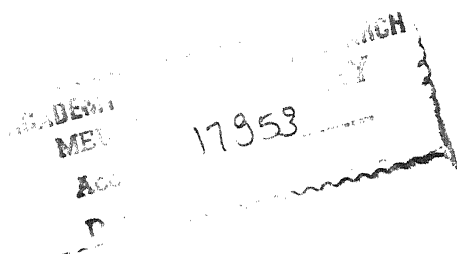
**Sri Ramanuja Vedanta Centre (Regd.)**

**10, South Mada St., Triplicane, Madras-600005.**



First Edition—April 1980.

<i>Price :</i>	Paper-back	Rs. 16.00
	Library Edition	Rs. 20.00
	Foreign Edition	\$ 5.00



---

VIDYA PRESS, 41, SUNKUVAR ST., TRIPPLICANE, MADRAS-

## FOREWORD

I am glad to know that Śrī Rāmānuja Vedanta Centre started in 1976 by His Holiness Sri Yadugiri Yatirāja Nārāyaṇa Rāmānuja Jiyar Swāmi of Melkote with the aim of propagating Śrī Rāmānuja's teachings is doing its best to the cause of Viśiṣṭādvaita Philosophy by its publications and conferences.

The present volume contains the papers submitted and discussed by eminent scholars both from India and abroad in the First All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja in July, 1979 at Śrīperumbūdūr.

The papers include themes as varied as :

- ‘Aesthetics in Śrī Rāmānuja's Philosophy’,
- ‘Śarīra-śarīri-bhāva’,
- ‘Śrī Rāmānuja as a Social Emancipator’,
- ‘Psychology in Viśiṣṭādvaita’,
- ‘Prapatti Mārga’,
- ‘The Influence of Divya Prabandha on Rāmānuja’,
- ‘Daily Routine according to Rāmānuja’,
- ‘Enduring Elements in Śrī Rāmānuja's Philosophy’,
- ‘Rāmānuja in Epigraphy’, and
- ‘Rāmānuja as a Critic’.

Śrī Rāmānuja's thought is a masterpiece of synthesis wherein no element of human action is meaningless or needless in the perspective of the total scheme of reality. It offers a system of goals and values which are smoothly self-consistent in a happy harmony of revealed truth, logical reason and factual encounter. Śrī Rāmānuja's logic has the distinction of being the most adequate to the hard realities.

The papers in the volume reflect this fullness of Śrī Rāmānuja's thought and will be a rewarding study to both the worlds of academicians and the lay-readers.

I have no doubt that Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre will continue its useful service by similar publications in the years to come.

G. R. DAMODARAN

B.Sc. (Engg.), C.Engg., F.I.E.E. (Lond.),  
F.I.Nuc.E. (Lond.), F.I.E. (India),

MADRAS,

*Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras.*

26th March, 1980.

---

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This volume of 'Studies in Ramanuja' consists of papers prepared for or presented at the First All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja held at Śrīperumbūdūr, on 21st & 22nd July '79. A brief report of the proceedings of the Seminar appears elsewhere in this volume. The Seminar was sponsored jointly by Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, Madras and Śrīperumbūdūr Sanskrit College.

Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre was founded in December 1976 by His late Holiness Śrī Yadugiri Yatirāja Nārayaṇa Rāmānuja Jīyar Swāmi with the following among other objects: to foster and encourage in all possible ways, study and research in Viṣiṣṭādvaita philosophy as outlined in the works of Śrī Rāmānujācārya and his predecessors and successors and to take steps to disseminate its tenets with a view to making it more popular among the peoples of the world and thus to strive by all legitimate means to secure the spiritual and moral welfare of the people, so as to ensure tolerance, contentment and happiness among them. The Centre is publishing since 1977, 'Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇī' a quarterly journal primarily in English. In May 1977 it brought out a special volume to commemorate the 960th anniversary of the birth of Śrī Rāmānuja.

The Śrīperumbūdūr Sanskrit College was started in or about 1872 and was recognized by the Government of Madras in 1892, and later affiliated to the University of Madras in Siromaṇi (Sanskrit) and Vidwān (Tamil). Several students of this College have worked and are working as Sanskrit and Tamil teachers in schools and colleges and several others are engaged in the propagation of *Ubhaya-Vedānta*.

The two organisations decided to sponsor the first All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja and his Social Philosophy and appointed a Sepcial Seminar Committee. Through their services and with the help of contributions received from charitable institutions and philanthropic individuals, resources for the Seminar were found.

Five papers included in this volume were received by the Committee from their authors to be presented on their behalf, as they were unable to come. Four of there are from Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, Dr. R. N. Safaya, Dr. V. Varadachari and Dr. R. Balasubramanian. Dr. Parthasarathy's paper was received too late to be read at the Seminar, but as it covers important later developments of

Śrī Rāmānuja's social philosophy and works on this subject in English are few, it has been included. It should be made clear that it presents the *Prapatti-mārga* according to the Southern School and that the Northern School has different opinions on many points dealt with therein.

Dr. P. B. Vidyarthi of Rānchi University and Prof. A.V. Rangachari of Annamalai University who had agreed to participate in the Seminar could not do so due to ill-health.

We have to announce with regret that Dr. G. Damodaran who had participated in the Seminar passed away recently. He handed over his paper at the Seminar itself, but it could not receive the last touches at his hands. In his death an outstanding Tamil scholar has been lost.

Sanskrit words and names in this volume are transliterated following the current usage of Orientalists. In Tamil words there are variations between one author and another, apparently because the spelling and the accepted pronunciation of the words differ in many cases.

We offer our thanks to all who have helped us to bring out this publication. Dr. G. R. Damodaran, Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras has been pleased to contribute a Foreword to this volume and we are grateful to him. The authors of the papers have taken considerable pains to prepare them and most of them attended the Seminar (some from long distances) and participated in its proceedings. Our thanks are due to the Press for promptly reporting the proceedings of the Seminar. We owe special thanks to M/s. M. C. Krishnan and M. A. Thirumalachari and Vidya Press, Triplicane, for bringing out this volume in a few weeks and M/s. Enejey Printers for printing the cover and the photographic plates. We thank Dr. K. V. Raman for the photograph of the temple at Śrīperumbūdūr, which adorns the cover. No amount of words can adequately express our indebtedness for the guidance and untiring help provided to us in bringing out this volume by Prof. M. R. Sampatkumaran.

May the grace of Śrī Rāmānuja be ever on all of us.

VIMALA RAMANUJAN

M. N. PARTHASARATHY

*Secretaries,*

Madras,  
20th April '80.

*Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, Madras.*

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	iii
PUBLISHERS' NOTE	v
1. AESTHETICS IN RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY —S. S. Raghavachar	1
2. SRI RAMANUJA'S SARIRA = SARIRI = BHAVA —E. J. Lott	21
3. SRI RAMANUJA AS A SOCIAL EMANCIPATOR —M. R. Sampatkumaran	41
4. PSYCHOLOGY IN VISISTADVAITA —R. N. Safaya	61
5. THE PRAPATTI MARGA—J. Parthasarathy...	85
6. 'AGAMAS' AND SRI RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY —V. Varadachari	119
7. SRI RAMANUJA IN EPIGRAPHY —K. V. Raman	133
8. DAILY ROUTINE ACCORDING TO RAMANUJA —R. N. Sampath	143
9. TAMIL LITERATURE ON RAMANUJA —G. Damodaran	151
10. THE INFLUENCE OF DIVYA PRABANDHA ON RAMANUJA—K. A. Manavalan	159

	PAGE
11. SRI RAMANUJA AND 'UBHAYA VEDANTA' —K. K. A. Venkatachari ...	167
12. THE ENDURING ELEMENTS IN SRI RAMANUJA'S THOUGHT—P. K. Sundaram ...	175
13. RAMANUJA AS A CRITIC —R. Balasubramanian ...	183

## APPENDIX ;

Report on the Proceedings of the Seminar ...	i
Welcome Address presented to the Governor ...	v
Address by the Governor ...	vii
About our Contributors ...	xi
Sponsors and Seminar Committee ...	xv

## PICTURES :

*Cover* : Temple at Śrīperumbūdūr with Śrī Rāmānuja as inset.

*Frontis-piece* : Śrī Ādikeśava Perumāḷ at Śrīperumbūdūr.

*Plate 2* : The Governor being received.

*Plate 3* : The Avatāra Maṇṭapa of Śrī Rāmānuja, with a view of the dais.

*Plate 4* : Dr. E. J. Lott reading his paper.  
Prof. C. Jagannāthāchārī presides.

*Plate 5* : Hon. Thiru R. Soundararājan delivering the valedictory address.

---







Srimate Rāmānujāya Namaḥ :

# Studies in Ramanuja

ALL INDIA SEMINAR ON RAMANUJA 1979

---

## Aesthetics in Rāmānuja's Philosophy

S. S. RAGHAVACHAR, *Mysore.*

### I

It has been long noted by competent students of Viśiṣṭādvaita, that it abounds in ideas that can go into the making of a full philosophy of beauty and that it can claim to be, both by implication and explicit statement, uniquely aesthetic in its central philosophical content. It is a wonder that traditional scholars simply note this characteristic and do not pause to gather up the basic aesthetic ideas into a coherent and comprehensive formulation. Modern scholarship, conversant with general aesthetics as a major branch of philosophy, has hardly entered into this core of Rāmānuja's philosophy. There is not a single treatise either in Sanskrit or in English working out the aesthetic philosophy of Rāmānuja in its requisite dimensions and a fair degree of thoroughness. The only distinguished exponent who emphasises this aspect of the philosophy in question is Prof. P. N. Srinivasachari and even he just throws up pregnant suggestions in his brilliantly eloquent expositions. There is still a need for something like a solid and patient consideration of Rāmānuja's aesthetics. The present paper has the modest aim of bringing together the elements of aesthetic thought in the writings of Rāmānuja in some kind of an analytical tabulation, and these elements are to go into the fully formed aesthetic doctrine of Rāmānuja, when that comes

to be propounded in the context of general aesthetics. Hence the present attempt is of the nature of a prolegomena.

## II

It is worthwhile putting first things first. On the basis of the abundantly repeated declarations in the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Smṛtis*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and the Āgamic literature, Rāmānuja affirms that *Brahman*, the Ultimate Divine Reality, has an aesthetic character. This, according to him, is the unambiguous contention of the seventh *adhikaraṇa* of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The number of texts adduced is truly impressive. The entire question is discussed fully in the *Vedārtha-saṅgraha*. In the *Saraṇāgati-gadya*, the statement of the beauty of God enjoys a priority over the enumeration of the major *guṇas*, and both Vedānta Deśika and Periya Vāccān Pillai note the significance of this sequence. In the *Jijñāsādhikaraṇa* of the *Srībhāṣya*, the concept of *subhāśraya*, adumbrated in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, receives specific elucidation to the effect that the sublime form of the Lord, with its aesthetic splendour, is both an *āśraya*, as being accessible to perception, and *subha*, as having the potency to work out the spiritual elevation of the percipient. In the *Vedārtha-saṅgraha*, the *prima facie* thesis that the beauty of Divinity is just an artificial expedient or a benevolent illusion, is mentioned and categorically repudiated on the strength of the venerable authority of the *Vākyakāra* and *Draṁiḍa-bhāṣyakāra*. It is maintained in the scriptures that the beauty of God is perceptible through the instrumentality of a purified mind, '*Manasā tu, viśuddhena*', implying that what is apprehended through such a pure instrument must be objectively real. Sudarśana Sūri says '*Mithyābhūtaṁ duṣṭendriyagrāhyam, aduṣṭakāraṇagrāhyatva-śravaṇāt paramārthabhūtaṁ ityabhiprāyaḥ*'. There can be no going back on this position of Rāmānuja and no explaining

of it away. Rāmānuja puts together all the aesthetic glories of the Supreme Being recorded in sacred texts in a grand passage in *Vedārtha-saṅgraha* :

“Yo 'sau āditya-mandala-antarvartī tapta-kārtasvara-giri-  
vara-prabhaḥ sahasrāṁśu - śatasahasra - kiraṇaḥ,  
gambhīra-ambha-samudbhūta-sumṛṣṭa-nāla-ravikara-  
vikasita-puṇḍarīka-dala-amala-āyatekṣaṇaḥ, subhṛ-  
lālāṭaḥ, sunāsaḥ, susmita-adhara-vibhramaḥ surucira-  
komala-gaṇḍaḥ, kambu-grīvaḥ, samunnata-aṁsa-  
vilambi-cāru-rūpa-divya-karṇa-kisalayaḥ, pīnavṛtta-  
āyata-bhujāḥ, cārutara-ātāmra-karatala-anurakta-  
aṅgulibhir-alāṅkṛtaḥ, tanu-madhyāḥ, viśāla-vakṣas-  
sthalaḥ, sama-vibhakta-sarvāṅgaḥ ; anirdeśya-divya-  
rūpa-saṁhananaḥ, snigdha-varṇaḥ, prabuddha-  
puṇḍarīka-cāru-carāṇa-yugalaḥ, sva-anurūpa-pitām-  
bara-dharaḥ, amala-kirīṭa-kuṇḍala-hāra-kaustubha-  
keyūra-kaṭaka - nūpura-udarabandhanādi - aparimita-  
āścarya-ananta-divya-bhūṣaṇaḥ, śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-  
asi-śārṅga-śrīvatsa-vanamāla-alāṅkṛtaḥ, anavadhika-  
atīśaya - soundarya - āhṛta - aśeṣa - mano - dṛṣṭi-vṛttiḥ,  
lāvaṇya - amṛta - pūrīta - aśeṣa - carācara-bhūta-jātaḥ,  
atyanta-adbhuta-acintya-nitya-yauvanaḥ, puṣpa-hāsa-  
sukumāraḥ, puṇya-gandha-vāsita-ananta-dig-anta-  
rālaḥ, trailokya-ākramaṇa-pravṛtta-gambhīra-bhāvaḥ,  
karuṇā-anurāga-madhura - locana - avalokita - āśrita-  
vargaḥ, puruṣa-varo dṛśyate : sa ca nikhila-jagad-  
udaya-vibhava-laya-līlaḥ, nirasta - samasta - heyāḥ,  
samasta-kalyāṇa-guṇa-nidhiḥ, svetara-samasta-vastu-  
vilakṣaṇaḥ, paramātma, param brahma, nārāyaṇaḥ  
iti avagamyate”.

This aesthetic characterisation of God is a fundamental element in Rāmānuja's outlook.

## III

Coming down from this height of Divine Beauty, we may consider the attitude to the beauty of the mundane and empirical order of existence. This is the familiar category of the natural beauty, and we have to understand that Nature in this connection consists of the *aparā prakṛti* and *parā prakṛti* of the *Gītā*, the physical universe and the universe of the living and conscious existence. If this Nature is taken as an independent and closed system, its beauty has no transcendent significance. If it is thought of as a deceptive show of what is intrinsically an annulment of Nature, its beauty, whatever it be, is a part of the vesture of decay and unreality. These two conceptions of Nature are discarded by the *Gītā* in its concept of *vibhūti*.

Rāmānuja is totally committed to the *vibhūti* concept of Nature. For him *prakṛti* in all its aspects constitutes a power of God, and through it the radiation of Divine effulgence takes place. The aesthetic splendour of Nature is a manifestation of the Divinity inhabiting and enveloping it. The naturalistic conception of Nature and the illusion-hypothesis concerning Nature can offer no account of Nature's beauty as an intimation of the Supreme Presence. The *vibhūti* view links Nature's aesthetic glory as evidence of the Divine permeating it.

Let us get a clear idea of the *Gītā* concept of *vibhūti*. Nature as a whole is an integral part of the Divine Spirit. Within Nature itself, whatever exhibits superior powers and striking radiance, does so because the immanent Divine presence finds in it a higher measure of transparency for self-disclosure. In answer to Arjuna's question as to what could function as a fitting object of contemplation to a seeker of God in order to reach the final vision of that Reality of Realities, Śrī Kṛṣṇa opens up the vast kingdom of Nature in its outstanding phenomena and holds out prospects of the supreme

vision through a contemplation of these proximate revelations of the Divinity. Even in the ultimate realisation of the Supreme, Nature figures as an inseparable dimension of It. So, both as a means and a part of the goal itself, Nature in its splendour gets assimilated to the Divine.

#### IV

The study of art forms a major branch of Aesthetics. It is noteworthy that the arts enter deeply into the Viśiṣṭādvaita pattern of worship, and worship in its totality is the crux of spiritual life in the tradition. Even the useful arts, such as gardening, are mobilized in the service of worship. Rāmānuja draws up a fine picture of an ideal garden in his *Vaikuṇṭha-gadyā*. Architecture plays a vital role in the religion of temples. No wonder, some of the finest architectural monuments have sprung up in the principal places of pilgrimage. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa in his *Śrīraṅgarājastava* pays enthusiastic tribute to the temple architecture of Śrīraṅgam, of the period prior to its desecration at the hands of the Muslims. The *Āgama* literature abounds in directions for the construction of the houses of God. Imposing structures bear testimony to the engineering and artistic excellences that were fostered in profusion by the religious spirit of Rāmānuja. Auxiliary sculpture and the making of the principal icons have created immortal masterpieces. Time and troubled history may have destroyed much, but what remains furnishes enough evidence of the summit of the artistic consciousness attained. Stone and bronze images, sacred and secular, people the Rāmānujite temples in amazing quantity and variety, reflecting an outlook for which the beauty of God-head was a genuine reality. Music, dance and sacred poetry flourished under the canopy of *bhakti* as indispensable parts of worship. All the arts were thus consecrated and carried the uplifting quality of adoration.

It is to be noted that temple-worship under Rāmānuja's influence, was no static routine, but a dynamic and thrilling procession of festivals throughout the year with marked variations and attunement to the seasons and occasions. Superb planning and trained skill in execution marked the life of temples in their best days. The best aesthetic education was provided in the glowing atmosphere of Godly fervour. The aesthetic standards that were operative could be gathered from Parāśara Bhaṭṭa's account of the transforming power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute in his *Śrīraṅgarājastava*, and the captivating power of the great idols worshipped can be glimpsed in the annals of saintly devotion. Worshipping Varada-rāja in all His glory, says Vedānta Deśika, makes him disinclined to crave for even Vaikuṇṭha. Lokācārya holds that of all the manifestations of God, the *arcā* form is the best, in view of its perfect accessibility and the revelation in it of all that the Deity is, without any diminution, to the ecstatic worshipper. He points to Śrī Raṅganātha of Śrīraṅgam as radiating all the perfections of God-head.

## V

There are two philosophical points connected with the arts and their Divine import. Can the media of artistic creation which are all physical and sensuous, taken over from the world of *nāma-rūpa*, carry transcendent and Divine truths? Will they not corrupt and distort the burden of meaning entrusted to them? In answer, it is to be contended that the entire world of physical reality from which the media of the arts are derived is itself Divine and the realm of *nāma-rūpa* is an attribute or aspect of God Himself. As a particular instance thereof (it is urged by Sudarśana Sūri on the strength of the *Gītā* and *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*), sound, the medium of poetry and music, is itself said to be a

'mūrti' of the Supreme Being, 'Śabdaḥ khe' and 'Śabdamūrti-dharasya'. The latter passage is adduced by writers on poetics also in defence of poetry. Thus, the media of the arts, being parts of the body of the Lord, are eminently fitted to reveal Him and His message. Rāmānuja asserts in the *Śrībhāṣya* that *prakṛti* and her products are intrinsically Divine, however they may stand misconstrued in a Godless perspective.

In common parlance, the arts may signify what is mundane and finite. But that is not their final import. They must be interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of *aparyavasānavṛtti*, posited in relation to language, but requiring an extension of application to the media of all the arts—that all the arts, philosophically conceived, bear a transcendent signification. This is not an artificial and secondary mode of interpretation, but the real and primary manner of understanding all forms of sensuous expression. The truncated commonsense interpretation not soaring to the Divine, is secondary and unnatural. Here, we have something like the theory of *dhvani*, but it is heightened and deepened beyond the contentions of that theory in the light of the Vedāntic doctrine of the *Paramātmān* animating all existence. It is not that art should be didactically coerced to bear a religious sense. When it is true to its own nature and destiny, fulfilling itself in its spontaneous creativity, unarrested by materialistic censorship, it cannot but inevitably soar to the Ultimate Soul of all Nature and all life. The Divine import of art is not a destruction, but a completion of the basic spirit of art. 'Pūryate na tu bādhyate'.

We are not to misunderstand that expression, through the arts, exhaustively bodies forth the Divine import. It just 'reaches' it, but cannot 'grasp' it in its totality. This is the only legitimate sense of the Vedāntic declarations such as '*Avacanena provāca*', '*Yato vāco nivartante*' and '*Neti, neti*'. The Infinite Reality



exceeds the utmost powers of human utterance, artistic or otherwise. The confession of this inadequacy is itself an effective mode of conveying the abundance of the intended theme. Art, when it reaches this glorious failure, is accomplishing its perfection.

## VI

With the standpoint of Rāmaṇuja thus gained, concerning the metaphysical authenticity of attributing beauty to God, the philosophical interpretation of the beauty of Nature and the movement of the entire stream of human arts towards self-consecration, we may proceed to derive guidance from his philosophy in the treatment of some common issues of aesthetics.

(a) *Symbolism* is one such issue. There is plenty of symbolism in temple architecture and sculpture. In the poetry of *stotras*, hundreds of *mantras* are incorporated. Even in the ritual of worship, many gestures and movements have symbolic meaning. But the interpretation of the symbols should follow the instructions contained in the *Āgama* literature, which has much esoteric Vaiṣṇavism; and authoritative teachings of qualified preceptors are a desideratum. The value of the symbols is said to lie in their spiritual efficacy, and one is to be properly inducted into them for reaping the benefits. This is what may be called extrinsic symbolism, which is not natural and intrinsic. It falls within a specific conventional body of precepts. No religion is entirely free from such symbols. In the aesthetic products incorporating symbolic elements, they are masterfully converted into features of beauty. Some symbols are particularly fascinating. For instance, Viṣṇu's *cakra* is said to represent the cosmic cycles, *kālacakra* and *jagat-cakra*. His conch from which sounds are to emanate, is said to represent divine wisdom

imparted by God Himself. The gem, Kaustubha, adorning His chest is said to symbolize the finite soul, the object of the tender care of the Lord. Ananta, the primordial serpent on whom He reposes, is a representative of the *jīva*, whose proper vocation is to be the *śeṣa* to the master. To be a *śeṣa* is to be subsidiary and to acquire value thereby, and this is the fundamental character of the *jīva*. Garutmān is said to be *Vedātman*, evidently meaning that he concretises the wisdom of the *Vedas*, and it is fitting that he should be the vehicle of Nārāyaṇa, the ultimate subject-matter of the *Vedas*. Some of the leading symbolic features of the Viṣṇu icon are explained in special sections in the *Āgamas* and also in the *Purāṇas* such as *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and *Śrīmadbhāgavata*. The cosmic and philosophical imports of the symbols do not seem to be after-thoughts and may have been the original seed-thoughts behind them. For those to whom this conventional symbolism appeals in relation to individual spiritual progress, there is plenty of it in Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇavism and the arts in service of the creed.

(b) *Realism* is one of standard theories in Aesthetics. True art must be, it is held, a representation of the real, 'holding the mirror up to Nature'. The view dominates the representative arts such as sculpture, painting and poetry. There is nothing in Rāmānuja's philosophy that goes against this doctrine. It would only insist that reality in the context must be truly conceived as including the Divine principle in its core. The theory of *vibhūti* requires this expansion, and finite reals have no substance by themselves. Art, on this view, is not realistic enough, if it stops with the derivative and adjectival entities. Accordingly, beauty in the finite is ultimately by virtue of the immanence of the Divine in it. As Browning would say, 'the sunset touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death and a chorus-ending from Euripides' shatter one's atheism. What may be termed Higher Realism is a part of Rāmānuja's philosophy.

(c) *Formalism*, like Realism, is one of the persistent trends in Aesthetics. It gets support from the non-representational arts like architecture and music. But these arts are a creative manipulation of reality itself, so that its aesthetic potentialities could stand unveiled. They are revelations rather than artificial constructions. Formalism, so interpreted, ceases to be anti-realistic. The philosophy of Rāmānuja does not accept the reality of abstract form, apart from its concrete embodiment. In the technical language of the school, '*jāti*' is nothing other than '*saṁsthāna*', and the latter is the inseparable configuration of 'matter' itself. A Formalism divorced from reality cannot form a part of Rāmānuja's aesthetics. Form, in and through matter as its structural organisation, is well within his circle of epistemological ideas. The nature of this Form is that it integrates diverse factors into an internally co-ordinated system, wherein each constituent lives in the whole and the whole pervasively sustains the parts. When the concept of Form is thus elucidated, it is easy to see that there cannot be a plurality of isolated forms. All of them must be integral to a single form, wherein the maximum diversity stands animated and harmonised by the single spirit of the whole. Having gone so far, we cannot stop going further and seeing in the Supreme Form, *Brahman* holding within Itself the entire expanse of finite reality.

There is a clear distinction in the school, as expounded by Parāśara Bhaṭṭa, Sudarśana Sūri and Vedānta Deśika, between *lāvaṇya* and *soundarya*. '*Soundarya*' stands for the beauty of components, *avayava-śobhā*, and '*lāvaṇya*' is the beauty of the totality, the *samudāya-śobhā*. This two-fold concept of beauty, perhaps, sums up the reaction of the school to the narrowly conceived Formalistic aesthetics.

(d) A view of beauty ancient in origin, but formulated as a theory in recent times, is that it consists of 'Expression'.

On this view, it is not a self-existent principle of aesthetic value, but is what it is by virtue of the revelation or expression of an inner or spiritual content.

The view accords well with the nature of the kingdom of arts. What is to be expressed is an inner vision and, in the process of expression, it acquires self-definition. The expression, we have seen, must fulfil itself in capturing the highest form or reality, of which the focal point of significance is the Supreme Being. In all moods of their highest expressiveness, the artists of real creative genius confess to their being the passive vehicles of an inspiration, descending, as it were, from above, and appropriating them as its instruments of self-articulation. All great art takes shape, not as something man-made and artificial, but as the veritable self-utterance of the Highest Reality. The artist has the blessed status of an instrument, through whom Reality communicates itself. Thus, art at its best is Nature's own self-expression at its best. Vedānta Deśika, in one of his peak confessions, owns to being a mere *vīṇā* on which the Lord (Veṅkaṭeṣa) is playing with delight. This passivity is a state of exaltation to the poet.

While thus art passes out of the realm of the work of man to that of God Himself, natural beauty, to which also the theory of Beauty as Expression has to apply, takes on the aspect of artistic creation. It is not something 'out there' by itself, solidly self-existing, but something projected and set up by the Creator's self-display. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa uses the self-display of a peacock as a simile. It is not unusual to speak of the Creator as a poet, dancer and musician, and Vedic literature uses the carpenter's analogy also. Creation as the art of the Divine Spirit is a valid picture on many counts. Vedānta Deśika, in a memorable poem, speaks of the Creator as a painter, He Himself constituting the canvas, with His creative joy as brush and compassion as the

paint. Instead of merely art being expression, beauty in all forms and levels, produced or discovered by man, comes, in the last analysis, to be viewed as the self-expression of Divinity.

Thus Realism, Formalism and Expressionism, properly stretched to their ultimate height of significance, converge towards a *Brahman*-centred aesthetics.

(e) The problem of ugliness is a seemingly intractable one in aesthetics, as is that of error in epistemology, and that of evil, moral and physical, in theism in general. It is a specific instance of the problem of imperfection, which is no problem for a materialistic or illusionistic metaphysics. The frame-work for treating it may be roughly indicated. Ultimately, imperfection is incidental to finite life ; neither Nature nor the Supreme Spirit can be the basis of it for an unclouded vision. *Apuruṣārtha* can happen to a *jīva*. Objective Nature can have no ugliness in itself, except in a misreading of its nature by a finite mind. The misreading must be in the nature of an arrested vision, wherein there is obscuration of Nature being the embodiment of the Divine. Nature's supreme integration by the immanent Divine presence must be missed, and that it is a self-revelation of the Primordial Artist must stand provisionally annulled. Such an arrested, fragmented and partially annulled perception on the part of the finite percipient, creates the impression of objective and ontological ugliness, whose locus in reality is the percipient himself. It is a malady incidental to his finitude. With his development of God-awareness, the possibility of the perception of natural ugliness must get transcended. The proneness to ugliness is much more conspicuous in the realm of art, wherein the finite soul expresses itself. It may be egoistic, subject to the opaqueness of *tamas* and misdirection of *rajas*, and may put forth forms of aesthetic creation embodying finite meanings, depleted of all transcendent reference. Art, with no intimation

of the *Paramātmān* in what it depicts, would be genuine ugliness. Just as the essence of evil is the life of God-negation, and of error the apprehension of the finite divorced from the sustaining presence of God in it, even so artistic creation untouched by the Infinite is aesthetic frustration and ugliness. Sudarśana Sūri and Vedānta Deśika assert that in the liberated perception of the emancipated, evil, ugliness and all such antecedent imperfections stand transmuted into integral elements of ecstasy. (*Śrūta-prakāśikā*, 4. 1, *Ad.* 1; *Tattvamuktā-kalāpa*, 2. 65).

There is no such thing as 'invincible', objective ugliness, and all forms of ugliness are man's own making by virtue of his *jñāna-saṅkoca*. Redemption from this proneness and predicament is an assured possibility.

(f) Modern Aesthetics in recent centuries makes a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, and all reputed writers on the subject dwell on the theme. Bosanquet suggests an alternative pair of terms for the two classes of aesthetic excellence, 'easy' and 'difficult' beauty. Easy beauty is what can please aesthetically, without requiring much strain and effort on the part of the spectator, and is formed of simple forms of aesthetical quality. Difficult beauty or the sublime calls up all the mental resources of the spectator and presents spectacles of great width, intricacy and tension, producing awe as well as amazed admiration. There is no doubt that some kind of synthesis requires to be attempted, and aestheticians are not wanting who have put forth the attempt without minimizing the value of the distinction. The sublime can pass imperceptibly into what Rudolph Otto names the 'numinous', evoking fascination as well as awe. The 'numinous' is the unique category of the religious consciousness according to Otto. It is interesting to note that he considers the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* as a magnificent presentation of the 'numinous', with all the terrors of

mysterious majesty and also the basic element of attraction. In one of the Rāmānujite definitions of *bhakti*, we have a combination of both. It reads, “*Mahānīyaviṣaye prītiḥ*”, love directed to what is grand. The point is that the distinction between the two aesthetic qualities of beauty and sublimity is not absolute, and they can be seen in fusion in the highest mystic experience. In the Viśiṣṭādvaitic idea of the Supreme Being, there is a combination of the two ideas of *saulabhya* and *paratva*, accessibility and over-powering greatness. The two aspects of the Divine are fundamental. What cannot be easily reconciled on the purely aesthetic plane seems to be synthesized in religious experience. The *Upaniṣads* abound in paradoxical declarations of this profound intimacy and infinity of the Divine. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in His mighty self-revelation in the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā*, is pictured as having the sun and moon as His two eyes. Arjuna exclaims, ‘*Hṛṣīto’sni dṛṣṭvā bhayena ca pravyathitaṁ mano me*’ (XI. 45). Rāmānuja explains the sun as signifying blazing powers, ‘*pratāpa*’, and the moon as representing ‘*prasāda*’, condescending grace. This seems to be a happy amalgamation of the two paradoxical attributes of God. The aesthetic dichotomy is resolved in Rāmānuja’s idea of God and his interpretation of the *viśvarūpa*. The root of this elaboration is already contained in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* description of the form of Viṣṇu as ‘*śubhāśraya*’.

## VII

An aesthetic patterned on the basis of Rāmānuja’s philosophy cannot but be heavily loaded with Vedāntic thought. A legitimate question arises and whether such a line of thinking leaves room for the autonomy of the aesthetic consciousness and the cult of ‘Art for Art’s sake’, needs consideration.

Some elementary principles must be noted before the question can be properly discussed. Aesthetic experience is

primarily a state of pleasure. But the pleasure is of a contemplative nature. It is pleasure arising on the contemplation of a perceived or imagined object. As it is said, it is a 'relevant pleasure' with an 'objective correlate'. Hence it stands different from pleasures of escape and pleasures accompanying the satisfaction of unaesthetic desires. In the classification of pleasures given in the *Gītā*, it comes under *sāttvika* pleasure. It is because of this *sāttvika* character that even tragic situations, depicted in literature, can be sources of aesthetic enjoyment. It affords the required 'psychic distance'. It is contemplative in the sense that it is not an action-conditioned satisfaction. The executive work of the artist is for purposes of securing a full vision of the aesthetic object, and thus subordinate to the 'full seeing'. In being contemplative, it is akin to intellectual or theoretical satisfaction. But there is a vital distinction, that its motivation is not the propounding of a true or objectively tenable view of things. It seeks a vision of the beautiful as an end in itself, be it perceptual or imaginative, with a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. The concern with truth, metaphysical or scientific, does not enter into the approach here. The fundamental interest is to contemplate on a thing of beauty, irrespective of its objective existence or otherwise. Fiction is not excluded from the realm of the aesthetic object, provided it is artistically convincing in the sense of being possible.

In this background of general aesthetics, we have to construe what would be the stand of Rāmanuja's philosophy on the autonomy of art. It is necessary to distinguish two levels of art, that which is manifestly secular, with no spiritual motivation, and that which is integrated as a factor within the practice of *bhakti*. Something definite can be conjectured on these two levels.

(a) Art may be secular in conscious intention ; but in so far as it depicts real beauty and sublimity, according to the



general view of *vibhūti*, it must carry suggestions of the Immanent Infinite. If it is a source of real joy, as all joy flows from *Brahman*, the only source of joy according to the *Upaniṣads*, it must be in some way an unknowing experience of *Brahman*. It cannot be cut off from that fundamental principle of beauty and joy. For carrying this touch of *Brahman*, all that is required of the work of art is that it should be true to its nature and accomplish its final purpose of contemplative pleasure. It should be free art for its own sake and, by virtue of its perfection, it inevitably establishes an unintended communion with the Divine. Thus, there is no jeopardy to the maxim of 'Art for Art's sake', but still at its height of triumph such art carries a self-transcendent message.

(b) At the second level, art participates integrally in the wholeness of the spiritual pursuit characteristic of *bhakti*. The cognitive aspect of personality seeks the Divine through *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* and *sākṣātkāra*. The volitional or active nature expresses itself in *karma-yoga* in the preliminary stages and flows into loving service called *kainkarya* or *sevā* in the advanced stage. The emotional and imaginative nature takes shape as love, *priti* and *dhyāna* filled with *priti*. It is the last aspect that manifests itself in the aesthetic life of *bhakti*. Now, spiritual art that is the materialisation of *bhakti*, is not independent of *jñāna* and *sevā*. It cannot be brought under 'Art for Art's sake', but is art impelled by the devotional zest and contributing to the fullness of Godward endeavour. The question is whether the art-factor suffers diminution in this fusion. Does it lose its innate rapture, because it includes in itself *jñāna* and *sevā*? Does *jñāna*, in its turn, lose its truth-value because it is fused with love of God and work dedicated to God? Does righteous endeavour become less righteous, because it is governed by the understanding of God and saturated with love of God? In general, do the three ultimate values of truth,

goodness and beauty lose the elements of intrinsic value possessed by them in their severality, when they enter into a process of joint realisation? It seems to be that they could not reach their full stature when pursued in mutual isolation, as they were provisionally in their initial realisation. They acquire enhancement in this supreme synthesis. For truth, to be alienated from beauty and goodness is a privation. For beauty, to rest on mere 'suspension of disbelief' and not on the certitude of authentic insight, and for it to be divorced from the life of holiness, is to lose a part of its vital substance. For goodness, not to be founded on the reality-factor and not to have the benefit of the aesthetic contemplativeness, is to be just preparatory to fuller actualisation. The conclusion may be hazarded, in the light of these considerations, that art that is spiritualised, though losing its autonomy, gains in the scale of values. Well may Vedānta Deśika spurn the mess of earthly pottage and cast aside trivial themes and opt for the inexhaustible riches of God. Good art may flourish in its autonomy, but great art finds its fulfilment in what is more than mere art.

### VIII

The poetic theory of *Rasa* seems to be favouring a kind of pseudo-Advaitism for a long time, and some critical clarification in the light of Rāmanuja's thought needs to be made on the subject. The theory is founded on Bharata's treatise on Dramatics. It describes eight fundamental emotional propensities of man and depicts how these evolve into eight enjoyable states of emotion, called *rasas*, in the spectators of drama. These emotions are evoked by the appropriate objects, *vibhāvas*, presented in an idealised manner (*alaukika*) on the stage with all the accessory and associated factors. Vedānta Deśika points out in his *Nyāya-siddhāntajana* that the basic emotional potentialities, *sthāyibhāvas*, are all forms of *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*, consciousness

adjectival to the self, and are not a bundle of distinct faculties. He also asserts that the list is not complete as it does not provide for *śānta-rasa*, the enjoyment at the spectacle of a spiritual life. That such a life is not one of inert quietude but an active exercise of Godward energy, renders it suitable for dramatic reproduction. (See also his *Sankalpa-sūryodaya*, p. 4, Kanchipuram edition). The locus of the *rasa*, the aesthetic delight, is certainly the spectator, and it lies in an imaginative 'empathy' with the feelings represented in the play on the stage. The spectator's emotional identification with the feelings displayed in his state of *sattva*, overcoming inertia and ego-centric pre-occupations) does bring out the final aesthetic joy. These are the well-known tenets of the *Rasa*-theory.

It is to be remarked that the identity of the feeling of the spectator with what is depicted by the actor and with that of the poet and even of the character presented, does not lead to *Advaita*. The aesthetic object, *vibhāva*, is there in the dramatic presentation, and no identification with it is required or posited. It is only identification with the feelings it evokes that is involved in the enjoyment of *Rasa*. No fusion of the subject and object is there in the experience. There is just a duplication of the feelings arising in reaction to the object in the poet, the character, the actor and the spectator. Such a community of feeling is actually invoked by Vedānta Deśika in explanation of the *bhoga-sāmya* between the *jīvātman* and *Paraṃātman*, in the stage of *mokṣa*, in spite of the distinction between the two in that *jagadyyāpāra* is uniquely characteristic of the Supreme *Ātman* (*Virodha-parihāra*, p. 382, Kanchipuram edition). The *vibhāva*, the aesthetic object, stands in undiminished objectivity, on which rests securely the unfoldment of the subject's *sthāyībhāva* into the *rasa*-state. Jagannātha regrets this necessity for an objective support for *rasa*, but for which *rasānubhava* would be straightaway the same as *Brahmānubhava* of the Advaitic School.

Neither the subject of *rasa*, nor its object, is lost in the other. There is just a unification of the emotions of the subject in response to the object. This is all that seems to be the essential fact of the situation according to the *Rasa* theory. It stands incorporated in the Viśiṣṭādvaitic theory in the hands of masters like Vedānta Deśika.

Something more can be naturally said from Rāmanuja's standpoint on the subject-object relation in the stage of joy or *ānanda* of which aesthetic experience is a good instance. In the *Bhūmādhikaraṇa* of the *Śrībhāṣya*, (1. 3, 7-8) the related *Chāndogya* (VII) passage is interpreted as representing the joy arising in the experience of the all-inclusive Infinite. The passage does not signify for Rāmanuja the elimination of the object, nor is it understood as propounding the joyous nature of the subject resting in itself, bereft of the object. In the same way, the *Daharādhikaraṇa* (1. 3, 13-22) speaks of the individual subject as growing into its fullness of natural splendour on its approach to *Brahman*, the Supreme Light. Thus, the subject too remains in the supreme experience. Rather, it attains in it to the fullness of its individual stature. Only pleasure of a *tāmasa* kind induces self-oblivion, as Sudarśana Sūri remarks (*Śruta-prakāśikā*, 4. 1. 1). The *Ānandamayādhikaraṇa* (1. 1. 13-20) has a strong and categorical pronouncement on the issue of the difference or identity between the subject and object in the state of *ānanda*: “*Yallābhāḥ yaḥ ānandi bhavati. sa sa eveti anumattaḥ ko braviti?*” (Who but a mad man will say that by attaining whichever being whoever becomes blissful, — he is himself that same blissful being?. *Śrībhāṣya*, I. 1. 20).

There is one necessary addition to be made. The *jīva* who meditates on *Brahman* must not look upon his object of adoration as outside his self, but as located in the interior of his own spiritual personality. This is brought out well in the

*Śribhāṣya* (4. 1. *Adhi.* 2). Again, in the state of *mokṣa*, he is said to realise the Divine Infinite as immanent in his own soul (4. 4. *Adhi.* 2). These fundamental propositions must govern our understanding of the subject-object relation in the experience of aesthetic joy. The reality of the individual subject, the reality of the Supreme Object and Its determining immanence in the former are the three relevant aspects of the highest state of *ānanda*.

# Sri Ramanuja's Sarira-Sariri-Bhava :

## A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

DR. ERIC J. LOIT. *Bangalore.*

Every religious system is integrated around some central principle, complex though the process of integration may be. At the core of each tradition there is no doubt, an intuited vision. But the vision will invariably be articulated in some conceptual or analogical form, even when the vision itself is said to be ineffable. Thus it is possible to discover an integrating concept at the centre of each religious system. Without probing to this cohering core and analysing its conceptual structure and significance, there can be no conceptual understanding of any religious tradition.

The central explicating analogy of Sri Rāmānuja's system of Viśiṣṭādvaita is the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*. I realise that others have argued similarly for the priority of the *prakāra-prakāri-bhāva* (e.g. P. N. Srinivasachari, B. Kumarappa, O. Lacombe). This was certainly a prominent relational category in Rāmānuja's system, just as were the *śeṣa-śeṣi* and *aṁśa-aṁśi* relationships. While, however, the *prakāra* analogy (which I would translate as a prototype-ectype relationship) signifies in a *general* way the *utter dependence* of the universe on the Supreme Self, it is the *self-body* analogy that most directly and most richly explicates the meaning of this dependent relationship. Not only does this analogy take us to the core of Viśiṣṭādvaita's whole conceptual structure (as I hope this paper will go on to demonstrate), but Rāmānuja himself resorts to it specifically at so many crucial points in his

explication of this system. And such is the intrinsic meaning of the analogy that even when Rāmānuja is referring to *Brahman* as the Supreme Self of all, there is always the implication that all else is His body.

Thus when Rāmānuja begins his great systematic treatise, *Vedārtha-Saṁgraha*, in the first few verses there may not be a direct use of the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*. But as soon as it becomes necessary to expound the *Sad-vidyā*'s climactic words, '*Tat-tvam-asi*', Rāmānuja makes explicit what was previously implicit—that the relationship of the Lord to the world is to be grasped only by considering the self-body relationship. Thus : "The statement '*Tat-tvam-asi*' sums up the *jīva*'s attributive relationship to *Brahman*. For as He is the Self of the entire universe, and as this entire universe constitutes His body, thus being a typification of *Brahman*, *Brahman* is the Self of each *jīva* and the *jīva* can be denoted by '*tvam*'... Because, therefore, all sentient and non-sentient beings constitute His body, *Brahman*—embodied in and typified by all—is denoted by all words." <sup>1</sup>

Or we may take by way of illustration another extremely important passage—Rāmānuja's interpretation of Arjuna's response to the glorious *viśva-rūpa-darśana*, which is undoubtedly the climactic point of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Thus on 11. 40 :

"aparimita-vīrya, aparimita-parākramas-tvaṁ sarva-  
ātmatayā samāpnoṣi, tatas-sarvo 'si—yatas-tvaṁ  
sarvaṁ cid-acid-vastu jātam-ātmatayā samāpnoṣi,  
ataḥ sarvasya cid-acid-vastu-jātasya tvac-charīratayā  
tvat-prakāratvāt-sarva-prakāras-tvam-eva sarva-  
śabda-vācyo 'si-iti-arthaḥ." <sup>2</sup>

In addition to the self-body, which seems to me to be used in an illustrative as well as a determinative manner, there are other ideas in these passages which we will need to bring out

later. In both these very important passages, however, it seems clear enough that the self-body analogy determines the meaning of the more general *prakāra*-concept, mainly because Selfhood is so fundamental as a determining category in the whole Vedāntic tradition. It is this analogical relationship, therefore, that is Rāmānuja's integrating and explicating core-concept.

If any further proof is required to substantiate this thesis, I would point to that richly suggestive section in the first *Sūtra* of *Śribhāṣya*, in which Rāmānuja expounds the Purāṇic evidence for the reality of the universe. The *Sarira-sariri-bhāva* is prominent throughout. The climactic sentence is : 'Those enlightened ones, on the other hand, with their insight into the essential nature of the Self, having their minds cleared by devotion, which is the means of experiencing the Lord as the universal Self,—such ones see this entire world with its various kinds of bodies...as Thy [the Lord's] body',<sup>3</sup>

It is not possible in this paper to trace the derivation of this *śarira-śariri-bhāva*.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, there are clear antecedents in *śruti* and *smṛti*, as well as in the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* tradition prior to Rāmānuja. But the great *Ācārya*'s originality in making this concept so centrally integrative to Viśiṣṭādvaita should not be under-rated. This was the work of a creative theological genius. That visionary who can provide his followers with an explicating core-concept, the significance of which persistently points them to the primal vision of Reality, and leads them to a more and more clear understanding of that Reality, and is so creative as to afford insights that even the visionary himself did not explicitly articulate—that visionary is a theological as well as a religious genius. *Sarira-śariri-bhāva* has precisely this kind of richly creative quality. Its seminal potency ensures that the full maturing and flowering of the original vision is yet to be seen,



I will classify my analysis of our core-analogy under seven heads, covering the whole range of concerns raised in religious philosophy,

1, *Hermeneutical significance*. Rāmānuja began his systematising work with the assumption that all scripture—the whole sacred tradition, Vedic and Vaiṣṇava—should be taken as authoritative for our understanding of Reality, though he only overtly refers to generally accepted Vedāntic sources in his Vedāntic writings. He was fully aware that inconsistencies seem to be there in the various *śākhās*. But he was not prepared to fall back on Śaṅkara's principle of selective hermeneutics, in which only *eka-vākyas* are allowed to determine the meaning of the whole, and no *vākya* can be taken in any sense other than a *lakṣaṇārtha*; for (said Śaṅkara) words can never be more than indirect pointers to the veiled mystery that is Reality.

Now it is true that Rāmānuja does take the concept of relational existence, especially the self-body analogical relationship, as his hermeneutical determinant. But this has such an intrinsic inclusiveness that it becomes possible to accept all scriptural revelation as equally valid contributions to our knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. In the course of his refutation of the *Advaita* theory of *avidyā* and *māyā* (in the *Jijñāsa-adhikaraṇa*), Rāmānuja had found it necessary to argue for a different interpretation of *śruti* from that followed by *Advaita*; he corroborates this interpretation with an impressive array of texts from *smṛti*. This then prompts the need for articulating some positive and comprehensive basis for his hermeneutical and exegetical method. Much of the last part of *Jijñāsa-adhikaraṇa*, therefore, is Rāmānuja's attempt to outline the principles of his hermeneutical method. It gives the basis for the type of *samanvaya* he sees between the varied kinds of texts found in scripture.<sup>5</sup> And throughout this passage, there is

constant reference to the need to see every text in the light of the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*. For example : 'This relation of soul and body forms the basis of the statements of co-ordination made in the next *śloka*'. Then, again, on that key *eka-vākya*, '*Tat-tvam-asī*', 'the co-ordination of the constituent parts is not meant to convey the idea of the absolute unity of a non-differenced substance : on the contrary, the words "that" and "thou" denote a *Brahman* distinguished by difference. For the word "that" refers to *Brahman* as the omniscient, etc...and the word "thou" conveys the idea of *Brahman* in so far as having for Its body the universe of *cit* and *acit*'. 'If the text is understood to refer to *Brahman* as having individual souls for His body, both words keep their primary denotation (i.e. not merely *lakṣaṇārtha*) ; and the text thus making a declaration about one substance distinguished by two aspects (*prakāra-dvaya*), the fundamental co-ordinating principle is preserved...It moreover satisfies the demand of agreement with the teaching of the earlier part of the section (*upakrama-anukūlatā*), and it also fulfils the promise that all things are to be known through one thing, that is, in so far as *Brahman* has for His body all *cit-acit* beings...And this interpretation finally avoids all conflict with other scriptural passages'.

As against *Bhedābheda*, Rāmānuja goes on to state that 'those who take their stand on the doctrine, proclaimed by all *Upaniṣads*, that the entire world forms the body of *Brahman*, may accept in their fulness all the texts teaching the identity of world with *Brahman*. For as genus (*jāti*) and quality (*guṇa*), so substances (*dravya*) also may occupy the position of determining attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*), in so far namely as they constitute the body of something else'.

Then, in a summary section bringing together a variety of texts with superficially disparate meanings, Rāmānuja concludes

that 'on this method of (self-body analogical) interpretation we find that the texts declaring essential distinction and separation of non-sentient matter, sentient beings and the Lord, and those declaring Him to be the cause and the world to be the effect, and cause and effect to be identical, do not in any way conflict with other texts declaring that matter and souls form the body of the Lord...'. It is this latter analogical perspective that is able to integrate the full range of Vedāntic texts into a coherent whole in which each kind of statement about *Brahman* and universe is taken with equal seriousness, resulting in a conclusion that is '*sarva-samañjasam*', to use the closing words of *Śrībhāṣya*.

Thus, the vision of Reality that Rāmānuja seeks to articulate is certainly inclusive, an 'organic synthesis' to use K. C. Varadachari's words. At the same time, it is also integrated around a concept that is decisive in its conceptual and hermeneutical significance. It carries its own inner coherence that needs to be clearly distinguished from all other systems. Thus Rāmānuja himself is frequently able to use this *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* to delineate his own position when in debate with other systems. Our contemporary concern, admirable though it may be, to avoid a negative polemical stance, should not be allowed to obscure the distinctiveness that is inherent in *Viśiṣṭa-advaita's* inclusive interpretation of Reality,

2. *Epistemological significance.* One essential reason why *Viśiṣṭa-advaita's* method of interpretation hinges on the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*, and why the delineation of its position in relation to other systems is often by means of this same analogy, is because in *Viśiṣṭa-advaita* knowledge itself is of this relational kind. Thus, very early in his exposition of what *Brahmajijñāsā* means Rāmānuja points out that of the *Pramāṇas* themselves, those accepted authentic means by which we are able

to know anything with certainty—each has an intrinsically relational structure. They therefore indicate the essentially relational character of that which is to be known. To use current communications jargon, 'the medium is the message'. That is, you cannot communicate anything that is not inherent in your means of communication.

Rāmanuja, however, goes further than this. He asserts that consciousness is always the self's consciousness of something. Such attributive or relational consciousness is essential to the self's being. Consciousness is that attribute of the self by which it relates to the other. And here it becomes immediately obvious that Rāmanuja allows a very positive role to the body in the whole process by which a self comes to know things, and indeed in the process by which selves are known. It is, however, a mistake to imagine that Rāmanuja limits knowledge, especially the knowledge of *Brahman*, to mere cognition, important though this may be to his understanding of the self-*Brahman* relationship. This relationship goes beyond, even though it includes, cognition, for it is essentially of the nature of *upāsana-bhakti*. It imparts a new dimension to the *Brahman*-knowing process. For it is devout meditation that lovingly recalls the nature of the loved one that was previously cognised, until there is an intimacy of relationship like the smooth, unbroken flow of oil.

Critics like B.N.K. Sharma have decried a lack of intuitive vision in the *Brahman*-knowledge described by Rāmanuja. Rāmanuja himself clearly sees that even in the cognition-based relationship of love, there is such an immediacy of perception that (as he declares almost at the outset of his *Laghu-Siddhānta*) it 'has the character of "seeing" or "vision"', and this "vision" consists in possessing the character of immediate presentation (*pratyakṣatā*)...(or) by direct intuition (*sākṣāt-*

*kāra*) which is dear above all things, since the Object remembered is so dear'.<sup>6</sup>

Now it is precisely this kind of mediated-immediacy that we find in the relationship of a self to its body, or vice-versa. There is such a directness of experience in bodily existence that some modern interpreters of the self-body relationship even argue for the existence of body alone—all self-experience being said to be merely body-experience. Commonsense (apart from our traditional doctrines of the self, and the sophisticated arguments that can be brought in to support them) says that this takes the self-body 'inseparability' to a ridiculous extreme. But their intimacy of mutual knowledge is such that the self-body analogy provides us with helpful insights into the nature of our knowledge of the Supreme Self, to whom, says Rāmānuja, we relate as body to self.

3. *Ontological significance.* Rāmānuja does argue that ways of knowing, and indeed the very nature of consciousness, implies a particular kind of ontological perspective. But this does not mean that epistemology determines ontology, as some have asserted. First comes the vision of ontic Reality, and according to *Vedānta*, this vision is granted only through the revelation of sacred scripture. Then comes our conceptual apprehension of this vision. On this basis we then describe and discuss the nature of epistemological and ontological structures. That core-vision of the *Sat*, the great ontic Reality, is the prior factor.

It is significant that Rāmānuja begins his great systematic treatise, *Vedārtha-Saṃgraha*, with an exposition of *Chāndogya's* *Sad-vidyā*. Very early in this exposition, Rāmānuja claims that 'the assertion that we can know all by knowing the One is tenable only if that "all" has reality of its own by having the One as its Self'. In his *Jijnāsa-adhikaraṇa* he even more

forcefully brings out this conviction that the whole universe is ontologically real, precisely because it participates as body in the all-including Reality, the Self of the universe. As the *Sat* that accounts for all beings, or *satyasya-Satya*, *Brahman* endues all existents with His own reality of Being. Here, however, Rāmānuja denies that such common reality of being derives from the mere fact of common substance, as perhaps Sāṃkhya would argue. Statements of identity, he writes, are 'not founded on unity of substance of the pervading principle and pervaded world, but on the fact that (*Brahman*) pervades the world as its Self, being its inner Ruler',<sup>7</sup> *tādātmya-antaryāmin*. Thus it is because the Supreme Self manifests Himself in all beings, includes all beings in His Being, that His reality of Being is communicated to the 'all'—as a self communicates its being to its body.

How then, asks Viśiṣṭadvaita, can this universe be regarded as *mithyā*, as lacking that reality belonging to its Self? How, then, can scripture's *māyā*—the mysterious power by which He creates and manifests Himself in the world—how can this intend some illusory mode of being? Of course, once sheer *San-mātra* is accepted as the sole Ultimate Reality, some such explanation for our everyday experience of the distinctions of the universe becomes inevitable. Rejecting such an understanding of *Brahman* as pure-Being, Rāmānuja asserted that just as the body distinguishes its self, relating to it as a distinct characteristic relates to its ground-substance, so distinction characterises even the transcendent Self, the ground-*Sat* of all. Reality is essentially *viśiṣṭasya-advaita*, a continuity of being characterised by inner distinctions.

It was this basic concept of *Brahman's* communicating His Reality to all beings, by reason of their comprising His body, that led Rāmānuja also to assert that every entity in the

universe, and every word signifying an entity, terminate in and find their ultimate meaning in *Brahman*, their inner Self. Every word, therefore, can be said to signify the Highest Reality in a direct (i.e. not by *lakṣaṇā-artha* only) sense. For does not the name of each body refer to its soul at the same time? All finite beings, therefore, are able to communicate the reality of that Being which is their inner Self—a concept that has a direct ethical implication, as well as giving a new direction to mystical life. Indeed, such a vision of directly mediated immediacy of the Supreme Reality still awaits more thorough articulation.

4. *Cosmological significance.* If Rāmaṇuja found the idea of *Brahman's* 'unreal' manifestation in the universe difficult to accept, he was even more alarmed by *Bhedābheda's* account of *Brahma-pariṇāma*. To say that *Brahman* at the time of creation engages in a process of self-transformation under the limiting instruments of finitude, is to teach *Brahman's* essential mutability; it is to say that this Perfect Being really suffers all the imperfections of the cosmic process, or at least the miseries of embodied souls. It is like speaking of a Lord divided in Himself, or like Devadatta having 'one hand anointed with sandal-paste and adorned with bracelets and rings, and his other hand hit by a hammer and burning with hell-fire'.<sup>8</sup>

Here again Rāmaṇuja resorts to his self-body analogy to explain in what sense *Brahman* as Transcendent Cause is related to His immanently effected state, the universe. 'When the relationship between Lord and soul is described in terms of identity of essence, then it is unsound to maintain difference; whereas there is no defect at all when this identity is stated in terms of a body-self relation'.<sup>9</sup>

Just as authentic core-selfhood transcends the changes and sufferings of the body, so the transcendent perfection of the

Supreme Self remains unimpaired by the creative process. To argue (as some have done) that such a doctrine must imply that the Supreme Self experiences all the pains to which the body is subject is to miss the point. Apart from Vedānta's conviction that the inner self is eternally immutable, even in the common-sense notion of the self there is a core of selfhood that is thought to continue throughout the body's experiences, even though it is recognised that they become experiences to the body only by means of the self. In other words, the self remains the subject throughout such experiences.

At the same time, however, Rāmānuja clearly cannot think of the Lord's transcendent perfection in terms of unrelated and remote immutability. Inherent in the self-body analogy is the concept of *apr̥thak-siddhi-sambandhana*. *Brahman's* relationship with the universe, His body, is one of inseparability, even though it in no way impairs His perfection of being. Rāmānuja does seem to distinguish the *svarūpa* of this Perfect Being from His *svabhāva*.<sup>10</sup> *Brahman's svarūpa* is His essential being in itself, those glorious qualities that exist apart altogether from His relationship to the universe. His *svabhāva* is His related nature, those glorious qualities which express His creating, sustaining, saving relationship with the universe.

In Rāmānuja's writings generally, however, there is little place for unrelated being, no matter how true he may be to the Vedāntic concern for Transcendent Being that is independent of cosmic contingency. Inseparability of relational being—as substance to attribute, as prototype to all its typifications, and especially as self inseparably related to its body—this is the keynote in Rāmānuja's account of *Brahman*, even in his account of *Brahman's* transcendent perfection. It is perhaps important to note that Rāmānuja does not think of *Brahman's* embodied state as coming into being only when there is cosmic



creation. In a sense, of course, we can say that the body emerges, is manifest, and functions as a unified entity, just because it exists 'in the self', with the self as its animator and co-ordinator. But as far as *Brahman's* Selfhood is concerned, the universal 'body' is contained within His being even in the unmanifest state of cosmic *pralaya*. At the time of creation, the Lord wills that His unmanifest body be changed from its causal state into its manifest effect-state. In other words, even in this cosmological process, the self-body analogy still plays its conceptual role, and there is 'inseparability' asserted even of that unmanifest stage when others would want to speak of undifferentiated *san-mātra*, *tan-mātra* or *cin-mātra*.

5. *Theological significance.* Clearly, the previous points have already introduced some of Rāmānuja's more specifically 'theological' concerns, for such overlapping cannot and should not be avoided. To put these concerns in a different form, Rāmānuja was convinced that the *saguṇa* Lord of the *bhakta* was in no way a lower order Being than the *nirguṇa* of the *jñānin*. It must have seemed to him that this absolutist attitude undermined the very basis of the religious life, making both *bhakti* and even the great Lord whose grace saves his *bhaktas* less than fully real. This makes the devotional relationship merely part of the *māyā*-order, conditioned by *upādhi*-existence, characterised by *avidyā*, all to be superseded by the transcendent realisation of *nirguṇatva*. 'No', replied Rāmānuja, 'it is precisely the glorious qualities of the Supreme Person that comprise and make clear His transcendence, His greatness over all-else'. 'The word "*Brahman*" denotes the Highest Person, who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses innumerable kinds of glorious qualities of incomparable excellence',<sup>11</sup> to quote his initial definition of this all-important term.

I have delayed any reference to Rāmānuja's definitions of the body until now, as they seem primarily to support the idea of *Brahman's* lordly control of the universe, as a self controls the body with which it is associated. To take a *Vedārtha-Saṁgraha* definition first : 'The relation between self and body means the inseparable relationship between a dependent entity and that on which it is grounded, between a controlling entity and that which it controls, between a principal and its subordinate' :

(pṛthak-siddhi-anarha-ādhāra-ādheya-bhāve niyanṭṛ-niyāmya-bhāvaḥ śeṣa-śeṣi-bhāvaś-ca).<sup>12</sup>

He goes on to define the *Ātman* as peculiarly appropriate to such a relationship, for it is 'the one who *obtains* an object, being in all respects the *ādhāra*, the *niyanṭṛ*, and the *śeṣin*.'

Then there is the well-known definition of the body in *Śribhāṣya* 2.1.9 :

yasya cetanasya yad dravyaṁ sarva-ātmanā svārthe  
niyantum dhārayitum ca śākyaṁ tac-cheṣatā-eka-  
svarūpaṁ ca tat tasya śarīram.

The significant new point being made here is that the body's control is by a conscious agent that is able to control and support the body for its own ends, thus confirming the belief that the self is essentially *sva-tantra*, the *bodypara-tantra*. In Rāmānuja's case, however, when the analogy is applied to the Lord-world relationship, the independent character of individual selves is necessarily limited to such autonomy as is permitted by the Supreme Self. Rāmānuja goes on here in *Śribhāṣya* 2.1.9 : 'All sentient and non-sentient beings together comprise the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by Him for His own ends, and they are essentially subordinate to Him' (*tat-śeṣatā-eka-svarūpaṁ*) (Cf. also *Gītā-bhāṣya* 10.20).

As the Inner Self of all, then, *Brahman* is the Inner Controller of all, which is precisely the point made in the *Antaryāmi-Brahmaṇa*. There, as with many other scriptural passages too, the sense of inner control is explicit in the text. Such is Rāmānuja's concern for the lordliness of *Brahman* in relation to His universe, that even in passages where there is no explicit reference to *Īśvaratva* he makes it an integral part of the text's meaning. For example, while expounding 'Tat-tvam-asi', he writes: 'If the text is understood to refer to *Brahman* as having individual souls for His body...the fundamental principle of co-ordination is preserved. On this interpretation the text further intimates that *Brahman*, free from all imperfection and endued with all glorious qualities, is the Inner Controller of individual selves and possesses lordly power' (*aiśvaryam-param*).<sup>13</sup>

A 'process' analysis of the self-body existence of man has pointed out that 'bodily control...remains the only clear case of instantaneous, non-mediated control we have'.<sup>14</sup> In other words, our volitions have an immediate effect in bodily experience in some form or other. There is an immediacy of communication between self and body. And the more perfect the individual's 'self-control', the more immediate and perfect the communication. In this sense, therefore, bodily experience is a form of self-becoming, or self-manifestation.

In the case of each individual's self-control and self-becoming through the body, there are obvious limitations. There are the counter-volitions of other individuals, and the limitations imposed by the natural universe within which the body functions. Transpose this self-body relationship to the *Brahman*-universe relationship, however, and these limitations disappear. This Supreme Self is in no way subject to the limiting counteraction of bodies outside His own body. Thus

He alone possesses a body unconditionally. He alone communicates His will to His body with perfect immediacy. He alone is the Perfect Self, supremely Subject in relation to the universe, His body. He alone is *satya-kāma*, *satya-saṁkalpa*<sup>15</sup>, a Supreme Person whose volitions are immediately effective and whose desires perfectly realised. This is complete self-manifestation through bodily existence. His body alone is not determined by *karmic* law; *karma* itself is under His control. The doctrine of the Lord's *līlā-vibhūti* could also be taken as another aspect of His perfect and immediate control of the universe. The point being made in this analogy is not so much that the Lord regards His creative activity as playful sport and therefore mere amusement and of little account. Its primary intention is to show how activity is possible without there being some unfulfilled need that the agent of the action is determined by. The Lord does not will something in order to obtain some benefit for Himself. His willing, controlling, and acting are but aspects of His perfect and immediate self-communication; His creative action is not compelled by any ressure outside His own blissful will.

6. *Soteriological significance.* All religions, certainly Indian religious systems, have a fundamental concern to attain some goal thought to be ultimately desirable. In Indian religions, *Mukti* from the bondage of *karma-saṁsāra* is the most common soteriological aim. For Rāmānuja, if we take his major writings as sources, it is *upāsana-bhakti* that is thought to be the great *sāadhanā* for realising this *sādhya*. Of course, the Vedāntic understanding of *Brahman* was such that He could not be reduced to the role of a mere means to some other end. He is found to be Ultimate End as well as the necessary means to that End. And the *bhakta* will become so conscious of the grace and love of his Lord as the only sure basis of both the *sāadhanā* practised or the *sādhya* desired, that he will realise in the last resort he is

utterly dependent upon *śaraṇāgati*. He who recognises that dependent relationship with the Lord is the ultimately desirable End as well as the only effective means, and that such a relationship is determined by divine grace, cannot but throw himself upon the mercy of that gracious Lord. Thus *bhakti* seems inevitably to lead to *śaraṇāgati*; and *śaraṇāgati* will certainly in its turn stimulate the *bhakti-bhāva*. But I will take this thought no further as I realise the *bhakti-prapatti* issue is a very sensitive one in the *Śrī-Vaiṣṇava* tradition.

Whether we see *bhakti*, *prapatti*, or *bhakti-prapatti*, as the most effective *sādhana*, think how understanding of this liberating process is enriched when set within the Self-body relationship, when the gracious Lord is seen as the inner Self inseparably related to His *bhaktas*, including them within His very Being as well as within the circle of His *audārya*, *vātsalya*, and so on. Such ontological intimacy makes the soteriological process significant in quite a new way. In some other religious systems, there is even an inherent incommensurability between them. Within the *śarīra-śarīri*-framework, though, the *sādhana*s as well as the Goal, are integrated into the system as a whole. The *mukti*-process then becomes a realisation of intrinsic inseparability, and the *mumukṣu*'s gradual growth in the very qualities characterising the inner Self (at least those qualities that the finite soul can properly share with the infinitely Supreme Person) becomes a movement towards the soul's Centre of Being.

If the Lord's *avatāra*, even *arcāvatāra*, is held to be the most significant instance of the divine grace by means of which the *bhakta* attains *mukti*, then again how entirely appropriate is the self-body analogical background against which to understand such special embodiments by the Lord! In the words of an article I wrote recently: 'A convincing doctrine of divine embodiment requires a doctrine of creation in which materiality

as such is seen as a suitable medium for divine self-manifestation. This will inevitably mean that a divine embodiment needs to be more than merely a manifestation, without any continuing reality of its material form. Of the three major *Vedāntins*, it is surely Rāmānuja who in relation to such a divine embodiment, provides us with the most convincing creation-model...the particular *Avatāra*-embodiment gives intense focus to the general *Pariṇāma*-embodiment of creation; the stage is set for a real incarnation of God in material human nature'.<sup>16</sup>

7. *Ethical significance.* One of the important issues discussed in *Vedāntu* is whether or not the *jīva* is a responsible agent of action.<sup>17</sup> Rāmānuja, unlike Śaṅkara, has no doubt that the self is capable of action, even though it does not possess absolute autonomy. Its *kartṛtva* is quite real, though dependent upon the permitting will of the Lord, as Rāmānuja goes on to say in *Śrībhāṣya*. 2. 3. 41. What precisely is this subtle relationship then, between the Lord permitting His dependants to act, and these dependants who yet have sufficient freedom to be responsible agents? Following the lead of the *Sūtra-kāra*, Rāmānuja first says that it is an *aṁśa-aṁśin* relationship, usually translated as a part-whole relationship. It should be noted that Rāmānuja is well aware that the soul cannot be a quantifiable *piece* or *khaṇḍa* of *Brahman*; the Supreme Self is certainly without such divisible parts. (It is a *pūrvapakṣa* point in 2. 3. 42). Nor should the whole-part relationship be taken to imply that the finite agent is of the same nature or *svarūpa* as the Lord who permits such finite action, though a subtle inseparability between them is clearly required. Rāmānuja therefore concludes: 'The *jīva* is an *aṁśa* of *paramātmā*; as a light issuing from a luminous thing...or as the body is part of an embodied thing' (2. 3. 45). Then, after again declaring both the distinction in essential nature, and hence in freedom of action, as well as the soul's

‘ inability to function separately ’, Rāmānuja sums up the whole argument by saying that ‘ the *jīva* is part of *Brahman* in so far as it is His body ’ (2. 3. 46). The analogy allows room for sufficient freedom of moral activity, while stressing at the same time that the soul is dependent for this power of action upon the controlling will of the Supreme Self.

Another related issue in *Vedānta* is the way in which the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* relates to *karma-kāṇḍa*, or how the duties enjoined in scripture relate to transcendent *Brahman*-knowledge. Without going into the details of the discussion here, we may merely note that Rāmānuja refuses to allow any radical discontinuity between them. The final part of *Vedārtha-Saṃgraha* <sup>18</sup> seems a pertinent source for understanding Rāmānuja on this issue. Significantly it follows a refutation of Prabhākara’s position on the interpretation of scripture. That in turn had been preceded by a passage declaring that all beings, including the various deities, to whom sacrifices are done, comprise the Supreme Person’s body. Rāmānuja then goes on to argue that inasmuch as all deities constitute the body of the Lord, acts performed with the aim of evoking a particular benefit from a particular deity in reality are done to the Lord Himself. And all actions done with genuine devotion, Rāmānuja asserts, are pleasing to that Supreme Self. More important, is not that Supreme Self so glorious in all His perfections and His supreme beauty that all possible actions His body can perform to please Him are entirely worthy of Him? Thus, while Rāmānuja does not formally teach *karma-jñāna-samuccaya*, it is this kind of synthesis that his inclusive *bhakti-bhāva*, undergirded as it is by his *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*, implies. The devotee, aware that he is part of the body of the Lord, and enthused by his knowledge of that Supreme Self’s glorious perfections, will desire to serve this Lord in every way he is able.

We have already noted that Rāmānuja's vision of Reality gives ultimate value to the cosmic process, and therefore to the *jīva's* activity within it. For this universe is the Supreme Person's body, and is therefore supremely *real*. But Rāmānuja takes us a step beyond this. The body, he asserts, exists for the sake of its self; its actions are directed towards the well-being of that self. Similarly, the universe exists for the sake of the Supreme Self; it exists to serve and to glorify Him. As His body, it is His *śeṣa* existing 'essentially in subservience to another'. Such subservience is, however, no imposition to the soul, for the Supreme Person is found to be a 'treasury of hosts of innumerable and immeasurable beautiful qualities, irreproachable, possessing an infinite supernal manifestation, an ocean of immeasurable and absolute goodness, beauty and love'.<sup>19</sup> Far from diminishing human or cosmic value, therefore, this conviction that our service and our very existence is useful to the Supreme, immeasurably enhances such value. In a strictly ontological sense, of course, Rāmānuja recognises that finite beings cannot contribute anything of value to, or anything that is needed by, that Supremely Perfect Being. At this point Rāmānuja acknowledges that the self-body analogy proves inadequate. It is His graciousness that makes the devotee's *kainkarya* and *sevā* acceptable to the Lord. He is even ready to make Himself dependent upon their loving service because of His love for them.<sup>20</sup>

What, then, is the final step in the soul's ethical progress? Surely it is to recognise that the whole universe, and especially human beings with their unique union of *cid-acit* being, are the Lord's beloved body. Just as the devotee seeks to serve the Lord Himself, so he should seek to serve his Lord's self-manifestation in the form of His universal body. Perhaps it is this implicit aspect of the great *Ācārya's* core-vision (his all-determining analogy of the self-body relationship) that today needs to be explored more fully by his followers.



## NOTES

1. *Śrī Bhagavad Rāmānuja Granthamālā* (hereafter RGM), edit. Śrī Kanchi P. B. Annangaracharya Swamy, Kancheepuram, 1956, pp. 4-5. Cf. J. A. B. Van Buitenen, *Rāmānuja's Vedārtha Saṁgraha*, Poona, 1956, p. 194.
2. RGM p. 105; cf. M. R. Sampatkumaran's translation of 11.40 in *The Gītā-Bhāṣya of Rāmānuja*, Madras, 1969.
3. RGM p. 81 (also pp. 77-84); Thibaut's translation, p. 95.
4. I have already attempted this in *God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Madras, 1976, pp. 29-48.
5. RGM pp. 93-101; Thibaut, pp. 126-44.
6. RGM pp. 52-3; Thibaut, pp. 15-16.
7. RGM p. 80; Thibaut p. 92.
8. Cf. Van Buitenen, p. 226; RGM p. 14.
9. *Īśvarasya svarūpeṇa tādātmya-varṇane syād-ayam doṣaḥ/ātma-śarīra-bhāvena tu tādātmya-pratipādana kim-cid-doṣaḥ*.
10. J. B. Carman, in his *Theology of Rāmānuja* (New Haven, 1974) has brought out this point well.
11. *Śrībhāṣya*, 1.1.1; Thibaut, p. 4.
12. Cf. Van Buitenen, p. 235; RGM p. 18.
13. RGM p. 96; Thibaut, p. 132.
14. C. Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God*. I am indebted to my colleague, Christopher Duraisingh, for the ideas in this and the following paragraphs. Cf. his unpublished doctoral thesis; *Towards an Indian-Christian Theology: Rāmānuja's Significance*, Harvard University, 1979.
15. *Śrībhāṣya*, 3.3.39.
16. 'The Relevance of Research in Religions: Understanding *Avatāra* as a Test-Case' *Bangalore Theological Forum*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1978, p. 52.
17. Cf. *Śrībhāṣya*, 2.3.33-9.
18. Cf. Van Buitenen, paras. 110-24.
19. *Ibid.* para. 142.
20. *Gītā-Bhāṣya*, 7.12, 8. 18.

# Srī Rāmanuja As Social Emancipator

M. R. SAMPATKUMARAN, *Madras.*

Srī Rāmānuja claimed during his life-time to be an orthodox follower of the Vedic philosophy and religion ; and that claim was by and large upheld by his contemporaries. However, in Hinduism, orthodoxy itself may be of more than one type. The variety of approaches to values permitted in India from time immemorial is reflected in social attitudes also. But, broadly speaking, two traditions, one conservative and another liberal, may be discerned in them. Each has claims to be orthodox, basing itself on the support of the scriptures and other religious texts and hoary usage. Srī Rāmānuja was an illustrious exponent of the liberal tradition. Subject to this qualification, he was a follower of tradition, and nothing that he taught or practised was directed against Vedic authority or intended to disrupt contemporary social organisation. If he left behind him enduring social reforms or proved a source of inspiration to other teachers in distant regions and times, if the flood of *bhakti* that overwhelmed North India in the late middle ages could be ultimately traced to him, it is because they were all latent in the tradition of liberal orthodoxy.

A brief indication may be given at the outset of the history of this tradition. The obvious criterion for deciding conservatism and liberalism in the Indian context is the attitude to caste. Accepting as a fact the existence of caste in some form even in the Vedic age, one early protest against some of its implications can be noticed in the story of Viśvāmitra. His name itself suggests universal charity ; and the *Gāyatrī* prayer attributed to

him aspires for enlightenment all around. Born a Kṣatriya, he is said to have become a Brahmin by virtue of his penance and austerities. Other incidents in his life relate that he came to the rescue of King Triśanku who had become a *caṇḍāla* on account of a curse and of Śunaśśepa who was about to be offered as the human victim in a sacrifice. His contest was with Vaṣiṣṭha who may be taken to represent conservative ideals.

Whatever the date of the Viśvāmitra story in its present form—and it cannot be later than the final redaction of the *Rāmāyaṇa*<sup>1</sup>—it testifies to the possible transcendence of caste barriers through severe spiritual discipline. The exclusion of women and Śūdras from the study of *Vedas* and the cult of sacrifices which grew rigid at one time, became somewhat untenable when the quest for mystical communion and philosophical speculation rose into prominence. In the *Upaniṣads*, women like Gārgī<sup>2</sup> and Maitreyī<sup>3</sup> are engaged in the endeavour of God-realisation. Satyakāma Jābāla<sup>4</sup> receives instruction about *Brahman* in spite of his inability to specify his parentage; and King Jānaśruti who is taught by Raikva, is addressed as Śūdrā.<sup>5</sup> In the *Mahābhārata*, Vidura is treated as a seeker after God.<sup>6</sup>

Caste restrictions seemed to have become less important or even irrelevant in the pursuit of the highest. The *Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads* have a text which declares that God reveals Himself only to those whom He chooses. *Yam eva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ* (*Kaṭha*, II 23; *Muṇḍaka* III : 2. 3). And perhaps even earlier we have relaxations of the exclusiveness in the case of the *rathakāra* and *niṣādashapati* who are accorded the privilege of performing sacrifices and reciting *mantras*.<sup>7</sup> A minor *Smṛti* text refers to women being invested with the sacred thread in the fabulous past of a prior *kalpa*.<sup>8</sup> Some relics of their right to pronounce *mantras* seem to have survived.

All these apparent deviations from the customs, regulations and laws relating to caste are duly taken note of and accounted for by orthodoxy. In doing so, however, a few concessions have to be made, weakening the theory that caste is absolute. One way of reconciling traditional caste with concern for universal spiritual welfare is to provide new approaches to God and new religious texts for the benefit of all, irrespective of caste or sex. The *Itihāsas* (epics) and the *purāṇas* constitute such texts. The new ways of approach to God include *bhakti*, *prapatti* and worship in temples as enjoined by the *Āgamas*, a class of religious works claiming scriptural authority.

The *Mahābhārata* is known as the fifth *Veda*,<sup>9</sup> authoritative like the other four but distinct from them in being universally accessible.<sup>10</sup> Members of all castes and women are assured of benefits, material and spiritual, through the study of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>11</sup> The *Bhagavadgītā* (IX. 32) declares that the whole-hearted worship of God will lead women, *Sūdras* and even those of sinful birth to the highest goal, as in the case of other castes. And worship in the temples built and maintained according to the *Āgamas* is open to all without any restriction.

To make all this possible, there must have been something like a working compromise between conservative and liberal trends in religion and social life. Traditional restrictions based on caste were maintained in some matters, but in others they were regarded as not applicable. The area of restriction and the area of freedom tended to be flexible, and debates could take place every now and then, resulting in the constriction or expansion of one or the other. They would vary according to the spirit of the age. The enduring vitality of orthodox tradition is borne out by changes in emphasis among the innovative and consolidating elements.

The rise of mystics in every generation and region helped in fertilising the spirit behind rituals and formalities of observance. Men of God were not regarded as heretics or enemies of an established church. From their own experiences they were allowed to verify and interpret the spiritual realisations recorded in ancient texts. Perhaps belief in the technique of *yoga* as no uncertain means to God-realisation helped to invest mystics with authority.

The protests of Jainism and Buddhism went farther in that they repudiated the *Vedas* and the religious and social tradition based on them. But, in practice, they were unable to overthrow the existing system and replace it by something else. Only some minor achievements were registered such as a fairly successful drive against animal sacrifices and the admission of men of all castes and women to ascetic orders. But the stress on compassion in their ethical codes, their ideals of social service, their comparative freedom from rituals and traditional religious discipline and their opposition to social stratification left an abiding influence on society. The movement of Hindu revival which left them ineffective in India, assimilated some of their values so as to wean prospective converts away from them.

Thus, when Śrī Rāmānuja was born, a revived Hinduism was flourishing both in the north and the south. Kumārīla had championed the cause of the much attacked rituals based on the *Vedas*. His writings helped them to regain dignity, but a new age of sacrifices was not inaugurated. Śrī Saṅkara's successful attack on the philosophical basis of Buddhism and Jainism had evolved a battery of replies to their formidable logic. The epics and the *purāṇas* had more than countered the glamour of Buddha and Mahāvīra with the help of their stories of divine incarnations and the blessings received through grace by devotees of Viṣṇu and Śiva. Temples were becoming more and more

popular, in spite of a supercilious attitude shown towards them by some sections of the intelligentsia.

So far as the spiritual needs of the masses were concerned, the orthodox position was not very encouraging, though room was left for vague hopes and there was a general tendency to recognise and honour authentic mystics, irrespective of their social status. The official theory about eligibility to salvation, according to *Ādvaita Vedānta*, would have been to limit it to such Brahmins as were ascetics and had realised *Brahman*. Others could hope for it only after a series of births bringing them to this position. Such a view was not without logical weakness, as Śrī Rāmānuja points out in the *Śrībhāṣya*; and it must have been further undermined by Śrī Saṅkara's noble acceptance, in his *Maniṣāpañcaka*, of any one, whether Brahmin or outcaste, as his *guru*, if he had authentic experience of *Brahman* as the sole reality. Nevertheless, the orthodox insistence on the way to *Brahman* being through the study of the *Vedas* (including the *Upaniṣads*) with all the restrictions imposed on it, must have left in an inferior position the majority who would not or could not study the *Vedas*. Most of them would have found *Nirguṇa Brahman* unattractive. Satisfaction of their religious needs through listening to the exposition of epics and *purāṇas* and worshipping at the temples might not have helped them to be sure of the highest spiritual good of salvation.

Śrī Saṅkara having reasserted the claims of the *Vedānta* against Buddhism, his successors had to deal with the problem of consolidating the philosophy of *Ādvaita* and of providing to the masses spiritual pabulum similar to that of popular Buddhism which had declined to a negligible position. The rigid separation in *Ādvaita* between *Saguṇa Brahman* and *Nirguṇa Brahman*, between empirical reality and absolute reality,

tended to keep philosophy and religion apart. The beliefs and religious activities of the people were apt to be regarded with condescension as suitable only to less advanced souls.

Alternatives to *Advaita* began to emerge from the time of Bhāskara. And when we come to Yāmuna, we find an endeavour to harmonise philosophy with popular religion. In his *Siddhitraya*, he interpreted Upaniṣadic texts so as to support a realistic view of the world and to enjoin devotion to a personal God as the means to salvation. He composed a brief summary of the *Gītā*. In his lofty and moving *Stotraratna*, he gave poetic expression to the harmony of philosophy and religion. The *Āgamaprāmāṇyā* was written to make worship in temples a part of the highest religion. He continued his grandfather's efforts to institute the recitation of the Tamil hymns of the Āzhvārs in temples and to deliver discourses on them. Tradition records Śrī Rāmānuja's differences with his views in regard to some stanzas of the *Tiruvāymozhi*.<sup>12</sup>

But one thing he left for his more famous successor, and that was the writing of a commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*, representing the tradition of the theistic interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* and pinpointing the deviations from Śrī Saṅkara's views. While his scholarship was extensive and skill in philosophical polemics outstanding, he perhaps felt that a closer study of the writers of the theistic tradition was needed to make a new commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* take its stand by the side of Śrī Saṅkara's. Anyhow, this work was not undertaken by him, and it is said that it was one of the unfulfilled ambitions of his life. He failed to write a detailed commentary on the *Gītā* also, although his *Gītārthasaṅgraha* shows that he must have carefully studied the entire text and analysed it thoroughly.

Not only by precept but by example also Yāmuna showed that he belonged to the liberal tradition. One of his disciples,

Kāñcīpūrṇa, was a Vaiśya mystic who is said to have been in communion with the Lord as enshrined in the temple at Kāñcī under the name of Varadarāja. Another, Māraneri Nambi, was an untouchable. They were among those who helped Śrī Rāmānuja to determine his code of social behaviour. Disrespect shown to Kāñcīpūrṇa by Śrī Rāmānuja's wife was one of the reasons that led him to *sāṇnyāsa*. Another reason was her reluctance to give food to a hungry man when food was available in the house.<sup>13</sup> The performance by Mahāpūrṇa of Māraneri Nambi's funeral as of one who had realised *Brahman* led to an interesting discussion between him and Śrī Rāmānuja where he explained and defended his action.<sup>14</sup>

However, the liberal tradition transmitted to Śrī Rāmānuja by the disciples of Yāmuna had to function within the limits of orthodoxy as defined by Vedic authority and *Smārta* tradition. In his *Śrībhāṣya*, he upholds the restrictions placed on the quest of *Brahman* by those not entitled to study the *Vedas*. The *Apasūdrādhikaraṇa* (1.3.33-39) takes this view on the ground that the study of the *Vedas* is held to be necessary for the quest, and that this study is not available to the Śūdra according to the *Smṛtis*.

The context requires the clearing up of an incidental doubt that may arise after it is concluded that the gods are qualified to seek *Brahman* because they have the capacity and are suppliants for the quest. The doubt is that all human beings have these two qualifications, and hence the restrictions placed on some of them cannot be valid. Śrī Śaṅkara and Śrī Rāmānuja take up more or less the same stand in the matter. The incidents relating to King Jānaśruti who is called a Śūdra by his preceptor and Satyakāma who does not know his lineage, are explained in such a way as to suit this conclusion. Though Jānaśruti is addressed as a Śūdra, the word is to be understood not in its



conventional sense of a member of a particular caste, but in its etymological sense of one fleeing from sorrow. As for Satyakāma, he is taught only after his preceptor infers that he must be a Brahmin. The case of Vidura, however, is exceptional. He must be deemed to remember what he learnt in a previous birth when he was qualified to study the *Vedas*. Instruction in the epics and the *purāṇas* can destroy sin; but it cannot confer a privilege barred by the *Vedas* from which these works derive their authority. (*Śribhāṣya*, 1.3.33).

However, the argument here makes a serious, an almost fatal concession. It is not denied that those excluded from the study of the *Vedas* can have the desire to seek *Brahman*, and that in this they can benefit from the instruction allowed to them. Śrī Saṅkara indeed admits that the knowledge of *Brahman* must have arisen in Vidura, Dharmavyādha<sup>15</sup> and others like them not entitled to study the *Vedas*, from memory of previous impressions, and that the effects of this knowledge are inevitable. Mention is also made in this connection of the fact that instruction in epics and *purāṇas* is open to the excluded category of persons. The implication here seems to be that Vidura and Dharmavyādha do not exhaust the possibility of the transcendence of caste in the quest of *Brahman*. It is possible that Śrī Rāmānuja has this in mind as well as attacks on him for not being cent per cent orthodox<sup>16</sup>, when he suggests that the *adhikaraṇa* is against the *Advaitins*, for the reason that knowledge of *rahman* as the sole reality can arise in many ways and not solely from the study of the *Vedas*. This, however, is no more than a debating point, for Śrī Rāmānuja made it his life's mission to see that the necessary continuance of the prohibition of the study of the *Vedas* in deference to tradition did not bar the majority of the people from treading the path to spiritual progress and from the attainment of God.

The *Gītā* comes to his aid in this mission. K. T. Telang, in his introduction to his translation in the Sacred Books of the East series, reaches the conclusion that the *Gītā*, while not rejecting caste, undermines it. This is mentioned only to indicate the flexible stand of the *Gītā* on this issue. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares that He created the system of four castes in accordance with the qualities of men and the functions appropriate to them and that He is not only the maker, but also the non-maker of the system (IV. 13). Women, Śūdras and even men of sinful birth can reach the supreme goal by finding refuge in Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sinners, once they developed devotion to Him, would become righteous very soon (IX. 30-32). Members of all the four castes are assured of the attainment of supreme beatitude by the performance of such duties as are determined by their qualities (XVIII. 41, 45-6).

Apart from these plain statements about the extension of spiritual franchise to all men and women, there are others in the *Gītā* which, according to Śrī Rāmānuja, imply that all persons, without distinction of caste or sex, can follow certain kinds of *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*. In IV. 28, a variety of *karma-yogins* are called *yoga-yajñas*, those who perform the sacrifice of union. According to Śrī Rāmānuja, they are those who undertake pilgrimages to sacred rivers and tanks and holy places. Yamuna has earlier defined *karma-yoga* as resorting to penance, sacred rivers, alms-giving, performance of sacrifices and such other things (*Gītārtha-saṅgraha*, 23). The definition is wide enough to accomodate activities for which a study of the *Vedas* is not an essential preliminary. Similarly, it is held that in XII. 10 when Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks of '*mat-karma*', He refers to such activities as building temples, making gardens for them, sweeping, sprinkling water over and plastering the floor of the temples, placing lights in the shrines, gathering flowers for worship, uttering God's names, circumambulating temples,

praising God and prostrating before the shrines. These are deemed to be the sprout of *bhakti-yoga*.<sup>17</sup>

Against this background, it is amusing to find some Western scholars showing obvious reluctance to admit any liberal or humanitarian teaching in the *Gītā*. Dr. van Buitenen suspects that the salvation promised to women, *Sūdras* and persons of sinful birth in IX. 32 has to be attained in the distant future through a series of births. Eligibility to the final freedom of the soul is, according to him, held by Hinduism to be the prerogative of the higher castes. Dr. Zaehner protests against the humanitarian twist given by Śrī Saṅkara and Śrī Rāmānuja to the statement in VI. 32 that the *yogin* looks upon the joys and sorrows of others as his own. He also lays down that eternal damnation is taught in the sixteenth chapter. A great tradition like the Hindu *dharma* and teachers like Śrī Rāmānuja cannot be put into the straight jackets devised for them by Western critics.

The 'humanitarian twist', the conviction that final release is available universally and the realisation that all are equal in the eyes of God, formed part of the daily staple of religious instruction among the followers of Śrī Rāmānuja. A commentary on the *Tiruvāymozhi* of Nammāzhvār which should be dated within a hundred years of Śrī Rāmānuja,<sup>18</sup> relates that Naṅṇiyar said that one could make a simple test to see whether one was a true Vaiṣṇava or not. If he felt pity and sympathy at the sufferings of others, he was a Vaiṣṇava. If he felt indifferent or perversely happy, he was not (*Īdu*, 1.2.1). This Naṅṇiyar was a disciple of Parāśara Bhaṭṭa, a son of Śrīvatsānka Miśra (or Kūreśa) who was the favourite disciple of Śrī Rāmānuja. Naṅṇiyar must have been passing on a traditional definition of the Vaiṣṇava. After all, we have in the *purāṇas* cases like the universal charity of Rantideva or Prahlāda's inability to think of anyone as an enemy.<sup>19</sup>

NFN  
1259

No. 17953

In Śrī Rāmānuja's life the most memorable instance of the identification of others' miseries as his own is his proclaiming a secret teaching, after promising to pass it on only to a few deserving pupils. Reprimanded by the preceptor for breaking his promise, he said that he deliberately sought hell in order to help in the redemption of so many others. Amazed by the wide inclusiveness of Śrī Rāmānuja's sympathies, the preceptor called him "Emberumānār", a word which can be roughly translated as "our greater Lord". This was intended to show that Śrī Rāmānuja's compassion seemed to exceed that of God, blasphemous though the thought might appear at first sight.

There is ambiguity about the secret teaching broadcast by Śrī Rāmānuja. The *Guruparamparā* account makes it out to be the *aṣṭākṣari mantra*, while Vara Vara Muni's commentary on Lokācārya's *Mumukṣuppaḍi* seems to identify it with the *caramaśloka* (*Gītā* XVIII. 66, regarded as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's last words on His teachings). It has to be borne in mind that both of them are included in the *rahasyatraya*, the triad of 'mysteries' of which the other constituent unit is the *dvaya mantra*. Instruction in all the three is an essential part of the system of religious and spiritual education organised by Śrī Rāmānuja. It is given to all without distinction of caste or sex, along with an initiation.<sup>20</sup> In thus broadcasting secret teachings, Śrī Rāmānuja made a revolutionary innovation. The only qualification he prescribed for receiving instruction (or initiation) was a desire to be taught. Vara Vara Muni, writing about 1400 in his *Upadeśartanamālai* (37), refers to Śrī Rāmānuja breaking traditional bounds and regulations.

Śrī Rāmānuja's strenuous efforts to make the masses realise that God is as easily accessible to them as to the hermit, ascetic, *yogin* or scholar, are in conformity with scriptural dicta and sanctioned usage. Forms of worship involving the

study of the *Vedas* or the recitation of Vedic *mantras* may be restricted to a few. But they are not the only way of approach to God. The *Upaniṣads* refer to *prapatti* directly and indirectly. It is a term which is generally taken to mean 'self-surrender (to God)' or 'seeking refuge (in God)'. In effect, this is reliance on the grace of God, making God Himself the means of attainment. He is both the means and the object to be attained, both the way and the goal. His freedom of choice in bestowing grace cannot be questioned. This need not be taken to be a denial of the moral law or relegating it to irrelevance ; but it is supplementing and completing ethics. God's compassion cannot be treated as an evil or anti-moral attribute. Behind such *Upaniṣad* dicta as "The *Ātman* is attainable by him who is chosen" and "Desirous of final freedom, I seek refuge" (*Kaṭhōpaniṣad*, II. 23., *Śvetāśvatara*, IV. 15), there lies an assertion of the omnipotence of grace. When God becomes the means, nothing can stand in the way of attainment. If the burden of sin weighs upon an aspirant or a feeling of unworthiness afflicts him, as it ought to do, he can take hope from the limitlessness of grace. The obligation of becoming worthy of divine grace rests upon every one, but this cannot affect the fact that grace is unconditioned. The efforts of the finite to attain the Infinite can never be adequate; but the Infinite can save, of its own accord.

Even this summary of the doctrine of salvation through grace bristles with the logical conundrums that have led to subtle polemics. That Śrī Rāmānuja taught it both by precept and example as a message of hope and cheer to all men cannot be questioned. His prose prayers (*Gadyas*) show the practice of *prapatti*. In them he throws himself at God's mercy after representing himself as burdened by innumerable sins of commission and omission, and at the end declares that he has received an assurance of redemption through grace. Some

recent attempts to question Śrī Rāmānuja's authorship of these prayers can be—and have been—shown to be untenable.<sup>21</sup>

Just as there has been a tradition about *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, there has been one about *prapatti* too. Its development and elaboration from its Vedic roots can be seen in the epics, the *purāṇas*, the *Āgamas* and the hymns of the Āzhvārs. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are shown as incarnations of God, descending to the world through compassion and exercising grace freely. The *Āgamas* elaborately analyse *prapatti* and recommend seeking refuge with God, particularly in temples. The Āzhvārs sing of the glory of grace and surrender themselves to His incarnations in various shrines. Yāmuna in his *Stotra-ratna* offers the model of an aspirant throwing himself at the feet of God, and Śrī Rāmānuja in his own way follows that precedent.

In its social implications, the doctrine of *prapatti* erased caste distinctions in the quest for God. Lokācārya in his *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa* points out that no one is disqualified from *prapatti*. The epics and the *purāṇas* mention a crow and an elephant being saved by grace, not to speak of a Rākṣasa like Vibhiṣaṇa. In the *Gītā*, (X. 30) Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares that He is Prahlāda among the demonic Daityas. The Āzhvārs belonged to all castes from the Brahmin to the untouchable. The observance of ritualistic purity is shown to be irrelevant. And thus we come to the conclusion that there is no distinction between high and low, between touchable and untouchable, in the need for the quest for divine grace.

This theoretical statement was followed in practice. Yāmuna's untouchable disciple, Māraneri Nambi, visited a newly constructed hall to be used for religious discourses: it was deemed equivalent to consecration. And his funeral, as already mentioned, was conducted by a Brahmin disciple of

Yāmuna in the manner prescribed for those who have experienced God. In the temples, all castes freely mixed, though the untouchables could only worship the idol from a distance when taken in procession. The *Āgamas* lay down that it is sinful to observe 'touch pollution' during visits to temples and participation in the temple festivals.<sup>22</sup> It may also be added that Śrī Rāmānuja threw open the doors of the Nārāyaṇa temple at Melkote (constructed by a Hoysala King at his instance) to untouchables for three days in a year.<sup>23</sup> They are given the name of 'Tirukkulattār' (men of noble lineage), and other castes are enjoined to mix with them during these three days. In the temples, again, commensality is insisted on at the time of the distribution of food offered to God.

Thus, Śrī Rāmānuja, on the authority of the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, epics, *purāṇas*, hymns of the Āzhvārs and the usage of distinguished teachers of the past, established the irrelevance of caste in the case of one having spiritual illumination. Caste is also treated as having only a limited application in the quest for grace. Among the later teachers owing allegiance to Śrī Rāmānuja, Lokācārya held that caste became extinct with the advent of enlightenment ;<sup>24</sup> while Vedānta Deśika thought that it persisted even then to a limited extent.<sup>25</sup>

These theoretical differences did not affect the affirmation of the spiritual equality of all men and women, though caste rules and traditions in regard to the study of the *Vedas*, inter-marriages, interdining and other such matters were regarded as binding. But the sting was taken out of the social distinctions by the organisation of Śrī Rāmānuja's followers as a brotherhood of *Bhūgavatas* (devotees of God) who were equal to one another in the temple, in receiving religious initiation from preceptors, in studying the hymns of the Āzhvārs which were judged to be the *Vedas* in Tamil, and in offering and receiving service from one

another. Social service was specially stressed by Śrī Rāmānuja as a fulfilment of devotion to God.<sup>26</sup>

Institutionally, Śrī Rāmānuja completed a task begun by Śrī Saṅkara and furthered by Yāmuna—harmonising temple worship with orthodoxy. Śrī Saṅkara upheld (*Brahma Sūtras* II. 2.42) the teachings of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* governing the usages in temples, except in regard to a doctrine attributed to it about the individual self being created.<sup>27</sup> Yāmuna denied in his *Āgamaprāmāṇyā* that this doctrine was held: he further took note of the calumnies and criticisms against the *Āgama* and refuted them thoroughly. Śrī Rāmānuja's *Sribhāṣya* (II.2.39-42) shows the *Pāñcarātra* to have the approval of Vyāsa.

Śrī Rāmānuja also instituted regular courses on the epics, *purāṇas* and the hymns of the Āzhvārs to spread spiritual education. All were welcome to listen and to question. For giving initiation, he authorised 74 disciples most of whom were householders.<sup>28</sup> He made it clear that while he himself was a *sannyāsin*, that *āśrama* was not necessary to be a teacher of religion and to offer initiation. He provided immense scope through such institutions for the growth of piety and zeal.

It may thus be seen that Śrī Rāmānuja's concern for social amelioration rose from his felt conviction that all men are embodied souls with God within as the *Antaryāmin*, the Internal Controller. The Vaiṣṇavas were asked to prostrate before one another because God was within everyone of them. The economic status of the different castes could have evoked only marginal interest from Śrī Rāmānuja. In his days, the Brahmins were vowed to poverty and the Vaiśyas alone were expected to amass wealth. But the rich were bidden to give alms and gifts generously. And the village economy tried hard to eliminate starvation. Free food available in temples also helped.<sup>29</sup> The emoluments of temple servants, most of whom



belonged to the lower castes, also improved under Śrī Rāmānuja's guidance.<sup>30</sup>

Śrī Rāmānuja's approach to social inequality was radical in that it was based on the vision of the presence of God in every one. Once this realisation became widespread, there could be no room for pride of birth or ill-treatment of those supposed to be of inferior lineage. In fact, Lokacārya states that high birth may be a hindrance rather than a help in the pilgrimage to Heaven, as it encourages the vice of egoism.<sup>31</sup> Vedānta Deśika's teaching that *prapatti* is for those who feel unequal to the practice of other means of realising God, is only academically different. For he makes it clear that, except for a few possible exceptions, all men are unfit and that they are fit only for the practice of *prapatti*.

This radical approach of Śrī Rāmānuja made itself felt far and wide. He rehabilitated devotion to God as philosophically valid and further showed that God's grace alone mattered. Other children of light felt the impact of the message directly or indirectly. It is significant that Rāmānanda who started religious and social reform on a large scale in North India in the Middle Ages, had been originally a member of Śrī Rāmānuja's sect. And through him the message of spiritual equality, of the efficacy of *bhakti* and *prapatti*, spread far and wide. It produced a ferment which had far-reaching consequences and has not still exhausted itself of its powers to uplift.

Śrī Rāmānuja's reforms have endured, because they did not seek to destroy tradition and to write on a non-existent clean slate. Tradition was not in need of destruction, he would have said, but only of fulfilment. In simplifying rituals and teachings, he was not only innovating, but also recalling the example of an earlier age with no complex rules or ceremonies. His great achievement lies in making a creative use of tradition for

bringing about social harmony through the recognition of spiritual equality and without undermining religion. Service to God and fellow men was what he preached and practised. And we need not hesitate to join in the chorus of his followers in temples who chant every day, "May the divine message of Rāmānuja spread to all quarters. For it is intended for the good of all the world."<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES

1. Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* I. 51-63.
2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. 8.
3. *Ibid.* IV. 5.
4. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, IV. 4.
5. *Ibid.* IV. 1-3.
6. See *Mahābhārata*, IV. 28. Also, V. 11, 34-40; XII. 165 etc.
7. See Jaimini's *Pūrva-Mimāṃsā Sūtras*, VI. I. 44-50; VI. 1. 51-2.
8. *purā kalpe tu nārīṇām māuñjibandhanam ucyaṭe*.
9. *vedān adhyāpayāmāsa mahābhārata-pañcamān*. In the epic itself there are statements claiming that it is equal to or superior to the *Vedas*. Such eulogy is given by other *purāṇas* also.
10. *śrāvayeccaturo varṇān kṛtvā brāhmaṇam agrataḥ* (*Mahābhārata*, XII. 335.48).
11. *Rāmāyaṇa*, I, i; VI. 131.
12. *Guruparaṁparā-prābhāva* of Pinbazhhiya Perumāl. Jiyar: various places in *Iḍu* (commentary on *Tiruvāymozhi*).
13. *Guruparaṁparā-prābhāva*.
14. *Ibid.*, also Lokācārya's *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa*, 234.
15. Though a member of a hunting tribe he was famous for his spiritual wisdom (*Mahābhārata*, *Vanaparvan*, ccx, ff.) Śrī Saṅkara's *bhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtrās* (I. 3.38) brackets him with Vidura as having knowledge of

*Brahman*. Lokācārya describes him as one at whose doors sages waited to have their doubts cleared (*Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa*, 231.)

16. Criticism of this kind asserts that Śrī Rāmānuja's system has little or no support in the *Upaniṣads* and that it is based primarily on works of inferior authority like the *Gītā*, the epics and the *pūrāṇas*—not to speak of the Tamil hymns of Āzhvārs which are not accepted outside the circle of Śrīvaiṣṇavas as having any sanctity of the kind attached to the *Vedas*. A recent illustration is a small book, written by an Advaitic Pandit, Sri Polaham Rāma Sāstrigal, seeking to prove the untenable thesis that the Dramiḍācārya quoted by Śrī Rāmānuja was none other than Nammāzhvār and not the ancient *ācārya* recognized by Śrī Śaṅkara.
17. *Gītābhāṣya* (XII. 11).
18. The *Īḍu* contains the exposition of *Tiruvāymozhi* by Nambillai as taken down by his disciple, Vadakku-t-tiruvīdi Pillai. Nambillai was taught by Naṅḷiyar. The line of succession of teachers will run thus: Rāmānuja—Parāśara Bhaṭṭa—Naṅḷiyar—Nambillai—Vadakku-t-tiruvīdi Pillai.
19. King Rantideva, giving away the last morsel of food and last drop of water to guests, prays :  
 na kāmāye' haṁ gatim īśvarāt parām aṣṭarḍdhiyuktām  
 apunarbhavam vā: ārtim prāpadye' khiladehabhājām  
 antaḥsthito yena bhavanty aduḥkāh.  
 (*Bhāgavata*, IX. 21.12.) He does not seek celestial glory or wealth or *mokṣa*, he prays that he may relieve the miseries of all by entering their hearts to experience them. Prahlāda, the son of Hiranyakaśipu, the *Asura* emperor, is questioned by his father as to what he has learnt from studies in statecraft as to how to behave towards friends, foes and neutrals. He rejects the instruction given thereon and asks :  
 sarva-bhūtātmake tāta jagannāthe jaganmaye,  
 paramātmāni govinde mītrāmītra-kathā kutah ?  
 (*Viṣṇupurāṇa* I. 19. 37). When the Lord pervades the universe and is the soul of all souls, he wonders, what is the point in talking about friends and enemies ?

20. "The *pañcasam̐skāra* is open to all those who wish to become Śrivaishnavas, not excluding the *pañcamas*" (Dr. N. Jagadisan, *History of Sri Vaishnavism in the Tamil Country*, p. 332). The *pañca-sam̐skāra* consists of five rituals constituting initiation. It includes the teaching of the *mantras* referred to. Whether or not these rites were widely practised in regard to the *Pañcamas*, they were open to women and members of all castes.
21. Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, in a contribution to the *Sri Venkateswara University Journal* entitled, "Dr. J. A. van Buitenen and Dr. Lester on the *Gītā*", has demonstrated these doubts to be utterly without foundation. The present writer has also dealt with the subject in an essay on '*Rāmānuja and Prapatti*' in "Dr. V. Raghavan 61st Birthday Commemoration Volume".
22. Vedānta Deśika quotes *Āgama* texts which denounce the observance of 'touch' pollution in temples :  
           śvapacān patitān vāpi spṛṣṭvā na snānam ācaret  
     It is declared that such observance will throw into hell the souls of the ancestors of the persons observing it :  
           Yat snāti śparśa-śaṅkhayā svargasthāḥ pitaras  
           tasya patanti narake kṣaṇāt.
23. *Guruparam̐parā-prabhāva* ; *Sthalapurāṇa* of Tirunārāyaṇapuram. One of the 108 names of Sampatkumāra worshipped at the temple is *ā-caṇḍāla-vimuktidaḥ*. It testifies to the custom of allowing *Pañcamas* to enter the temple during the last three days of the annual *Brahmotsava*. Even now, members of this caste make an annual pilgrimage to Melkote at this time of the year, even though their disabilities have been removed from 1940's.
24. *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa*, 199-220.
25. "The qualities of caste pertaining to the body which are due to some special qualities of the body arise even at the time of birth and remain till death. The Brahmin-like qualities which arise out of the preponderance of *sattva* in the mind may be present in all castes...Owing to the Brahmin-like qualities (of the mind) and the like, the attainment of the supreme

end of life and the *upāyas* therefor and also such things as eulogy may be found in all castes". (*Rahasyatra-yasāra*, ch : 25, p : 306, M. R. Rajagopala Iyengar's translation, 1956).

26. Service to the *Bhāgavatas* or devotees of God is stressed by the Āzhvārs as the fulfilment of devotion to God. Vide, for example, Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi*, (VIII. X). Śrī Rāmānuja's *Gādyas* refer to this. The teaching was further developed by teachers of both the southern and northern schools among the followers of Śrī Rāmānuja.
27. Śrī Saṅkara delivers his verdict on the *Pāñcarātra* system under *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (II. 2. 42) :  
 yattad ucyate yo'sau Nārāyaṇaḥ paro' vyaktāt  
 prasiddhaḥ paramātmā sarvātmā sa ātmanātmānam  
 anekadhā vyūhyāvasthīta iti, tanna nirākriyate :...  
 yadapi tasya bhagavato ' bhigamanādilakṣaṇam  
 ārādhānam aśram ananyacittatayā abhipreyate,  
 tadapi na pratiṣidyate...na Vāsudeva-samjñakāt  
 paramātmanāḥ Saṅkarsaṇa-samjñakasya  
 jīvasyotpattiḥ sambhavati...asangataiṣā kalpanā.
28. *Guruparamparā-prabhāva*.
29. The temple had an important economic and social role, when it served as the granary, the bank, the theatre and the club, in addition to providing satisfaction to religious needs. Its festivals attracted people from far and wide and stimulated economic activities. From the food offerings made daily, a portion was set apart for free distribution. Even now, there are lingering traces of provision for food to people from other places. The staff of the temple also sell at a cheap price their shares of the offerings.
30. *Koṭil Ozhu* gives details of the reforms in temple administration carried out by Śrī Rāmānuja at Śrī-rangam.
31. *Śrīvacanabhūṣana* (212-16).
32. One of the verses used in the temples after the recital of the *prabandha* is concluded for the day, runs thus :  
 Rāmānujārya-divyājñā pratīvāsaram ujjvalā,  
 diganta-vyāpini bhūyāt, sā hi lokahitaiṣiṇī.

# Psychology in Viśiṣṭadvaita

DR. R. N. SĀYĀ, *Chandigarh.*

## A. INTRODUCTION TO RAMĀNUJĀ'S PHILOSOPHY

To Sāṅkara, the Ultimate Reality is *Brahman*; who is devoid of all attributes (*nirguṇa*). The finite universe, with the intelligent principle that governs it, is below the level of *Brahman*, and hence Sāṅkara postulates a God of lower level than *Brahman*, and makes Him the creator, sustainer, destroyer and ruler of the universe. This God possesses attributes and is called *Īśvara* or *Apara Brahman* as distinguished from the higher Lord, *Paraṁ Brahman*. Rāmānuja accepts *Īśvara*, the *Saguṇa Brahman*, as the Ultimate Reality (in place of *Nirguṇa Brahman*) and refutes the idea of *Nirguṇa-Brahman*, because such a *Brahman* cannot be known by any means—perception, inference or scripture.

Hence *Īśvara* is the Ultimate Reality, is the Real of the Real (*satyasya satya*), Light of Lights (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*), the Truth (*satya*), the Consciousness (*jñāna*) and the Infinite (*ananta*). He is the supporter (*prakārin*), the controller (*niyantṛ*) and the totality (*śeṣin*) of the universe. In relation to the individual souls, He is the redeemer (*rakṣaka*) and the merciful. He uplifts those who surrender to Him. He is all beautiful (*bhuvana-sundara*). He is the twenty-sixth principle after the twenty-five principles, categorised by Sāṁkhya and is therefore *Puruṣottama*, higher than *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*.

According to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* is pure Consciousness. Consciousness and *Brahman* are identical. But Rāmānuja states that consciousness is an attribute of *Īśvara*. To Śaṅkara, consciousness is His essential nature (*svarūpa*), but to Rāmānuja, consciousness is His quality (*dharmabhūta-jñāna*).

According to Śaṅkara, the universe is an illusion, it is unreal. *Brahman* alone is real. But Rāmānuja follows a realist and objective approach by calling the universe real. He talks of the world as the body of *Īśvara* or as His attribute. There are three realities, viz., *Īśvara*, individual soul (*cit*) and material world (*acit*). *Cit* and *Acit* constitute the body of *Īśvara*, they are His attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*). Thus the Ultimate Reality has two major parts, viz., (i) the essential part, the substantive part (*viśeṣya*) which is the substratum (*adhāra*) and does not undergo any change, and (ii) secondly, the body, the attribute, the *viśeṣaṇa*, (i.e., the *cit* and *acit*) which undergoes all change. The universe is thus the body of *Īśvara*, and a real. It is a sport (*līlā*) of the Lord, a divine comedy. This repudiates the *Māyāvāda* of Śaṅkara. The individual also is real, as real as *Īśvara*. The relation between *Īśvara* and the universe, and also between *Īśvara* and the *jīva* is that of substantive and the attribute, the owner of body and the body. There is no difference in heat and fire. Similarly, there is no difference between *Īśvara* on the one hand and the world of matter and spirit on the other. Hence the non-dualism of *Īśvara* and matter-spirit. But their mutual relationship is that of substantive and attribute, and hence the non-dualism is qualified non-dualism (*viśiṣṭādvaita*). It differs altogether from the non-dualism of Śaṅkara. This concept has full bearing on psychological principles, and hence there is a fundamental difference between Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita as regards psychology.

The doctrine of triune unity, i.e., the unity of the individual soul (*bhokṛ*), matter (*bhogyā*) and the Lord (*preritṛ*), elaborated by Rāmānuja, affords intelligibility to Vedāntic psychology. Psychology deals with the relation between subject and object, mind and matter, and if both are considered illusory (as per Advaita) it loses its significance and existence. *Vaiṣṇava Vedānta* therefore draws a significant corrective to Advaita psychology.

There are a number of points, in addition to those stated above, where Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita differ, and because of which the whole psychology is described anew.

To Śaṅkara the *jīva* is unreal, but to Rāmānuja, the *jīva* is as real as *Īśvara*. To Śaṅkara the *jīva's* nature is ignorance, all his body and mind is unreal, superimposed upon his Self by *avidyā* and so the whole psychology has some worth only at the empirical level, but vanishes at the higher spiritual level (*pāramārthika*). But to Rāmānuja, the *jīva's* nature is knowledge; although it has knowledge also as attribute and this attributive knowledge is limited and contracted due to *karma*. To Śaṅkara, *Prakṛti* is illusory, and is to be discarded. But to Rāmānuja, it is real, and stands for the experience of *jīva* in accordance with his *karma*. Liberation, according to Śaṅkara, means lifting of the veil of *Avidyā*. But, according to Rāmānuja, liberation means expansion of the constituent knowledge (*dharmabhūta-jñāna*) of the *jīva* to infinite strength, so as to make him capable of understanding all things at the same time. Through moral and spiritual discipline, he is to rise step by step till freedom from *karma* and embodiment is obtained. The *jīva* is infinitesimal like a spark, but its intelligence is all-pervasive, and can know everything when freed from *karma*.

Viśiṣṭādvaita possesses a number of other special features, because of which it has received the utmost popularity.



of the interaction of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. But the nature of the interaction remains a riddle. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, it is an attribute of God and the soul. As an attribute of the soul, it is separable, but not as an attribute of God. Mimāṃsā talks about two parts of the soul, the essential part which is conscious, and the other part which is unconscious, like an iceberg, of which one part is above the sea-level, and the other is beneath.

According to Advaita, everything but Pure Consciousness is illusory and unreal. *Brahman* is equal to Pure Consciousness. Vijñānavāda Buddhism talks of everything as illusory, except consciousness.

Some Western Idealists call consciousness a reality and not an abstraction, as the light of the Self.

Rāmānuja holds the most commonsense point of view. He considers consciousness as an attribute of the conscious, a reality and not an abstraction.

## 2. *Rāmānuja's Theory of Consciousness*

Rāmānuja gives a detailed exposition of the subject, which satisfies modern thought.

(a) First, he says that Consciousness is not a substance, created by the contact between the subject and the object, as Nyāya says. If it were so, where does it go before and after the contact? Consciousness is continuous and eternal. It is present in the present perception, reasoning and memory. It is inseparable from the subject in all his cognitive activities (internal and external). It is therefore independent of sense-object contact, and is not a created substance.

(b) Secondly, he says, Consciousness is neither the subject nor his agent, but the act of cognising the object by the subject

to whom it is related. Advaita calls it the subject, which is unreasonable, because Consciousness is a function and not the subject. Hence it is neither the Absolute *Brahman*, nor the individual soul.

(c) Thirdly, he says, Consciousness is a function of the subject, whether soul or *Īśvara*. It is not the witness, as Advaita says. Nor is it any object. It is not a stream of an expanse, nor is it discrete momentary experiences. Though it is absent in sleep, it is continuous. Only under certain conditions like sleep, non-existence of Consciousness is possible. If it were the subject, how is it that it is absent in sleep? Actually, it is not the subject, but the function of the subject.

(d) Fourthly, Rāmānuja says that Consciousness is an attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the self and *Īśvara*. As light is the attribute of fire and fire is the substratum of light, so it is an attribute of Personality, an inseparable quality (*apṛithaksiddha-dharma*). It is inherent in the self as its trait (*dharmabhūta-jñāna*).

In the words of Śrīnivāsācārya, "Viśiṣṭādvaita absolutism checks the extremes of realism and idealism and points out the defects of the pure object philosophy and the pure subject philosophy by insisting on the reality of the *kṣetrajña* or the knowing subject and the *kṣetra* or the knowable object, the correlativity of the subject-object relation and the immanence of the super-subject or *Ātman* in *Cit* and *Acit*."

### 3. States of Consciousness.

According to Advaita, the dream state, the wakeful state and the sleep state are all unreal and illusory. But, according to Rāmānuja, there is a real character in all the states. Even the dreams are not unreal.

During the waking state, the self is awake, and it contacts the external world through the mind and senses. In the dream state, the self breaks away from the external world by shuttering the senses. Its mind works, and it experiences a succession of memory images without any coherence and co-ordination. As the mind actually works in this state, we cannot call it unreal.

According to Śaṅkara, each state of Consciousness is sublated by the successive higher state. But Rāmānuja takes a realistic stand. According to him, the three states are continuous as those in the growth of a man, the stages of life, childhood, youth and old age. Continuity persists in all the states, and there is no sublation or contradiction. There is a particular cyclic order in which the states function, viz., waking to dream to sleep to waking again, and so on, as explained in the *Upaniṣads*. The concept of sublation is Śaṅkara's own, and it has no validity. If waking is sublated by dream, dream by sleep, and sleep by *kaivalya*, then following the same logic *kaivalya* must also be sublated by some other state, say, nothingness (*śūnya*). Then the consequence would be nothingness which is unacceptable.

Consciousness is continuous, though it has degrees of perfection. In the subconscious and the dream state, Consciousness is dim and confused. In the waking state, it is distinct and clear. In the *mukta* stage, it is divine and perfect. In the former two states, it is limited, finite and contracted. But in the final *turiya* or *mukta* state, it is all-pervasive. The goal of all life is to break the walls of finiteness and make finite Consciousness infinite.

Finally, we may quote Rāmānuja accepting the following definition of Yāmunācārya regarding the nature of Consciousness: 'The essential nature of Consciousness consists in that it shines

forth or manifests itself through its own being to its own substrate at the present moment or that it is instrumental in proving its own object to its substrate.'

#### 4. *Dream Theory*

Bādarāyaṇa in the *Brahma-sūtra* states that dream is an intermediate state between sleep and waking, or waking and sleep, and it is called *sandhya*. Again, it is a state of creation, wherein objects like chariots and roads are created and experiences of joy and sorrow take place. These creations, however, are not real, but illusory. There are no chariots, and no actual objects. These dreams are representative in character.

Now the question arises : "Who creates these dreams?" Rāmānuja states that all power of creation belongs to *Īśvara*, and not to the individual. He creates dreams through His *devamāyā*. To support this fact, he presents the following arguments :

(a) The individual does not possess the capability of creating objects which are not there. His powers are limited. The dream experiences cannot be created by him, as these are far beyond his powers. So it is *Īśvara* who makes him experience the dream through the individual's own psychic apparatus.

(b) Some dreams are prophetic (*sūcaka*). The *jīva* of limited powers cannot bring about the fruition of events in future which are experienced in dreams. Even his intense volition cannot bring fulfilment of dreams.

(c) The individual sometimes experiences unpleasant dreams. He would not entertain any desire to have such dreams. So he himself is not responsible for the creation of dreams. It is

*Īśvara*, who, residing in the heart of the individual as *antaryāmin*, creates the dreams for the enjoyment or suffering of the individual in accordance with his merit or demerit.

(d) The cause of dreams is the *karma* of the individual. Meritorious *karma* results in pleasant dreams. Evil actions beget unpleasant dreams, as a punishment for sins. Thus, some dreams are retributive in character. They evoke joy or sorrow. Good actions beget pleasant dreams, creating mental comfort and joy. Sins beget unpleasant dreams, disturbing mental peace and causing physical exhaustion. Thus, dreams have a moral cause and they produce physical and psychical effects in the receptive state.

The ethical and the mystical (prophetic) aspects of dreams are a special contribution of Rāmānuja. The two aspects are inter-connected. The more the individual becomes *sāttvika*, with self-control and piety, the more does he experience prophetic dreams, wherein the individual has the higher communication with the Divine.

### 5. Deep Sleep

Śaṅkara says that the Self exists in deep sleep as witness (*sākṣin*) of *avidyā*, and the ego is totally dissolved. After waking, he says, 'I slept well, I was pure Consciousness free from all egoity, and was witness of *avidyā*'. Rāmānuja modifies the whole explanation. He says that there is no witness, and no Consciousness persists in this state. The person, on waking from sleep, says only this much; 'I slept well'. Though he is conscious of nothing, it means that the subject 'I' persisted, and the object of knowledge was absent. The soul in that case remains in the state of self-consciousness, and the cognition is not functioning at all at that time. To Śaṅkara the self is Pure Consciousness. But to Rāmānuja the self is not

Consciousness, but pure ego, who possesses Consciousness as an attribute. What persists in deep sleep is the self, the subject, and not Consciousness. If the self did not persist in deep sleep, he could not remember on waking that he slept well, and again he would not have a permanent self-memory, as there would always be a gap between one wakeful state and another. If we identify the self with Consciousness (as Śaṅkara does), then the phenomenon of void in sleep could not be explained. So sleep is not a breach of the continuity of the self, as it is evident from the continuity of work and from memory.

#### 6. *Turiya* and *Yogi-pratyakṣa*

The *Upaniṣads* talk of the *turiya* as the fourth state of Consciousness. Rāmānuja adds *yogi-pratyakṣa* as another state. In the *turiya* state, the individual crosses the finiteness of his body and gets unfettered Consciousness (*nirupādhika-jñāna*). It is the state of realisation of the limitless expanse of Consciousness. It has no contradictions which obscure the realisation of the Ultimate Reality. It is divested of all the limitations of body and mind.

Rāmānuja differentiates between *turiya* and Yogic intuition. The latter is a higher type of Consciousness, a divine Consciousness. Through this the individual perceives the entire reality, as Arjuna perceived when the divine eye was granted to him by Kṛṣṇa. It is supersensory in character, and is the highest Consciousness accompanying liberation. According to Rāmānuja it is obtained by divine grace (*Bhagavatprasāda*). "Whom He chooses, by him He is perceived". (*Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads*).

## C. FACTORS OF PERSONALITY

(a) *Concept*

Human personality is a prototype of the cosmic personality, it is a microcosm in the macrocosm. The *jīva* is a monad and it contains in itself both matter and spirit. It is a *prakāra* of *Brahman*. The empirical self is the knower (*jñātṛ*), experiencer (*bhoktṛ*) and doer (*kartṛ*). Thus he is endowed with all the three psychological aspects,—cognition, affection and conation. Consciousness is his inherent attribute. To the Vaiśeṣika, the *jīva* is non-intelligent, and intelligence is its adventitious quality. But to Rāmānuja, the *jīva* is intelligent like *Īśvara* (though its intelligence is circumscribed by *karma*) and intelligence is its essential trait. According to Sāṃkhya, the *puruṣa* is indifferent and passive, and it is *prakṛti* that dances before him and involves him in the world-drama. But to Rāmānuja, man is active by nature, and his knowledge is all-active. To Śaṅkara, the *jīva* is the reflection of *Ātman*, but Rāmānuja calls him the finite form of the Absolute. It is real and not a reflection. *Jīvas* are many, according to their physical and mental characteristics, depending upon their *karma*.

Rāmānuja falls in line with the modern psychologists as regards the concept and nature of the human personality. As a realist he clearly explains the nature of personality, the relation between man and man, between man and God, and between man and Nature. The whole universe, according to Rāmānuja, is rooted in *Brahman* and pulsates with His life. Every living organism borrows its life from Him, and grows and blossoms forth. Every plant has a seed, it takes roots in earth, sprouts up and grows to its fulfilment. There is growth, continuity and fulfilment. The human personality follows the same principle. "Personality implies inner growth and the unfolding of the infinite consciousness that belongs to the *jīva*. Causality thus

implies continuity, immanent unity and free causality". An example of causal relationship in the human personality is that of childhood to youth (and not that of clay to the pot). Every personality grows continuously according to its endowments.

### (b) *Factors*

As for the factors of personality, Rāmānuja enumerates three major ones, viz., (i) body and *manas*, (ii) the self, and (iii) *Antaryāmin* *Īśvara*. The *manas* of Rāmānuja is a wide term, identical with the *antaḥkaraṇa* of Sāṃkhya and Advaita, and incorporating in it ego, *citta* and *buddhi*. The psycho-physical system is also the same as given in Sāṃkhya. The *Ātman* is the essence of personality, *manas* and *śarīra* are its mental and physical bodies respectively. The *Ātman* is the knowing subject (*jñātṛ*). Thus, each personality is a trinity in unity, just as *Īśvara* is.

### (c) *The 'ātman'*

What is the essence of individuality? *Ātman*, the self, is the essence. Rāmānuja examines the other views on this subject and repudiates them :

(i) The Cārvāka view that the assemblage of atoms is the essence is erroneous, because matter does not think.

(ii) The Vitalists' view that *prāṇa* is the essence is also wrong, because *prāṇa* is not an intelligent entity. Its task is maintenance and reproduction.

(iii) The Sensationalistic view of the Buddhists that the cluster of five *skandhas* (or aggregates) is the essence is wrong, because it does not explain the reason for unity and continuity.

(iv) Those who think that the mind is everything, are wrong as the mind is a mode of *prakṛti* and is not spiritual.

(v) The Advaita theory that the *jīva* is an illusory reflection of *Brahman* in *avidyā* is a mere phantasy.



The essence of personality, according to Rāmānuja, is the *ātman* who is self-luminous and morally free. He is the 25th category, beyond the 24 categories as enumerated in Sāṃkhya. The *ātman* is self-manifest and is his own proof. He is monadic and infinitesimal, He possesses light or *jñāna* or self-consciousness as his integral quality. *Jñāna* is the attribute (*dharma*) of the self (the *dharmin*), hence it is called *dharma-bhūta-jñāna*. The consciousness and *ātman* are distinguishable (as attribute and substantive), but not separable. The relation of the *ātman* to *Brahman* is that of spark and fire, *śarīra* and *śarīrin*. *Brahman* or *Īśvara* is the source, sustainer and controller of the individual personality. Every person comes from God and goes back to Him, as He is the home of all perfection. Man is bound by *karma*. What some call *avidyā* is really *karma*, and it is *karma* that is the cause of imperfections in life. Pure *karma* leads to the union with the Lord, and vicious *karma* is the cause of degeneration. But every man has the moral freedom to have the *sāttvika* traits and follow the practice of selfless duty (*niṣkāma-karma*). The *ātman* falls into bondage, because of bad action, because of false identification with the body made of *Prakṛti* and the *guṇas*, and because of the desire (*kāma*) for the pleasures of the body. The process has been explained in the *Gītā* (II, 62–63). First rises attachment, then desire, then frustration, and then mental confusion and finally moral death.

According to Rāmānuja, the individual soul no doubt is an effect of *Brahman*, but he has existed in *Brahman* from all eternity as an individual being and mode (*prakāra*). Hence his eternity. The material elements also subsist in *Brahman*, but they are said to originate when they pass into the gross condition at the time of creation. But the soul possesses at all times the same essential qualities. The soul is continuous and eternal. It retains its individuality even after attaining liberation.

Thus, Rāmānuja states a number of unique facts about the self. He posits plurality of souls, as this is evident from the distribution of pleasure and pain. Each soul reincarnates and maintains its identity throughout its births. Each soul is an *aṁśa* of *Īśvara*, in the sense of a mode (and not a fragment) like a spark from fire. Essentially, it possesses the same characteristics as *Brahman* (hence non-dualism), and what constitutes the difference between the two is that its intelligence expands and contracts. The theory of plurality of *puruṣas* is obviously due to the influence of Sāṁkhya.

(d) *Manas*

The *manas* of Viśiṣṭādvaita corresponds to the *antaḥkaraṇa* of Sāṁkhya and Advaita, and mind of the Western psychology. *Manas* reveals to the soul the inner states of pleasure and pain and, with the aid of ten senses, conveys a knowledge of the outer states. The functions of *manas* are threefold: decision (*adhyavasāya*), self-love (*abhimāna*) and reflection (*cintā*), corresponding to its three aspects as *buddhi*, *ahaṁkāra* and *citta*. It corresponds to the subtle body which serves as the substrate of life. It remains as long as the state of bondage lasts.

#### D. FUNCTIONS OF THE MIND

##### 1. *Cognition*

Rāmānuja's theory of cognition is realistic, rejecting on the one hand extreme materialism and, on the other hand, extreme mentalism. From the materialistic point of view, ideas are nothing but sensations stimulated by matter. There is nothing like an independent mind or knowledge. According to Saṅkara, the object is a psychosis (*vṛtti*) of the mind, objectified by *avidyā*. The objects have no real existence apart from the *vṛtti*. To Rāmānuja both exist, the object as well as the idea. The perceiving self is real, and so is the external world. No object

in the universe is unreal and no cognition is unreal. All knowledge produced has a real character (*sarvaṁ vijñānaṁ jñātaṁ yathārtham* or *sarvaṁ vijñānajātaṁ yathārtham*.) Ideas are counterparts of objects. There is reality of the perceiving self, of the external world and of the cognition thereof. A cognition depends upon both the object and the subject. An object is illumined by cognition and it is not a shadow of the idea, nor a mental construction (as Advaita says).

Again, knowledge has the power of illumining, and therefore it is neither a copy of the object nor its duplication. It is something more than that. Although the *jīva* is finite and infinitesimal (*aṇu*), it has the cognitive capacity of mirroring the whole universe, because consciousness, which is its inherent attribute, is all-pervasive (*vibhu*) and infinite.

Cognition is two-fold, observation (*amubhava*) and remembrance (*smṛti*). Remembrance is as valid as perception, and deserves to be given a separate place. All remembered knowledge may assume the form of a sort of perception, but that does not make it perception, because the objects of perception are not present at the time and place of remembrance.

Observation is two-fold: perception and inference. Inference is based on indirect proof or *tarka* and the use of both positive and negative instances. The non-essentials are eliminated and a general principle is established.

### *The Process :*

Cognition has three bases : (1) the subject, (2) the object and (3) the subject-object relation. From the point of view of the object, the external world is important for cognition. As for the subject, Rāmaṇuja presents a gradation. The immediate subject is *manas* and senses, but they are directed by the *ātman*,

which is itself an attribute or *śartra* of *Īśvara*. So the immediate subject may be the mind or *ātman*, but the remote subject is *Īśvara*. Consciousness is an attribute of both. Hence there are four factors on the subject side : *Īśvara*, *ātman*, *manas* and the senses. The fifth factor is on the object side and is the object of perception or cognition. The subject-object relation means the co-ordination of these five factors. The result of the co-ordination is the cognition, which works as the attributive intelligence of the self. The cognition, whether it is present experience or memory, reveals both itself and the object of cognition.

#### *Levels of cognition :*

Rāmānuja describes three levels of cognition : (1) perception (*pratyakṣa*) ; (2) inference (*anumāna*) ; and (3) intuition (*divyapratyakṣa*). This corresponds to perception, *parokṣa* and *aparokṣa* of Advaita. Śaṅkara's views regarding the authority of scriptures have not been accepted by Rāmānuja. Intuition, according to Rāmānuja, is the highest level of cognition. The first two levels have limitations, due to the *karma* and *vāsanā* of the individual. Consciousness is the same in all the three levels of cognition, and in each of these levels some aspects of the real are exhibited. But the total reality is exhibited in the third level. The other lower levels of cognition are illusory cognition and dream cognition. Rāmānuja holds that even these cognitions are real. The false object has some advantage of familiarity. This compares favourably with modern theories of illusion. Even the dream experiences are real, being the result of our past *karma*.

Thus, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, all knowledge is real, but it has levels of truth. Illusion is partial truth. A mirage is an error, not because the element of water is not present, but because the water in it cannot serve our purpose. It is not real

(*yathārtha*), because it is not practically useful (*vyavahārānu-guṇa*). The second level is the empirical level. But this also is not perfect, until it takes in the whole of reality. That is possible only when we are divested of all imperfections through *karma* and devotion and we attain divine perception, which is the highest level of cognition, the desired goal.

## 2. Perception

According to Śaṅkara, perception is mere 'existence' (*asti*) and, actually speaking, the objects of perception (pot, cloth etc.) are unreal. These things do not exist and are mere phenomena. But Rāmānuja accepts all perception as real. Perception, according to him, is not mere 'is' (*asti*), but also the existence of the object. If the object exists even for a short duration, it exists and is hence real. Reality and unreality do not depend upon duration. There is no question of sublation of the present perception.

The process of sense perception follows the process of cognition. Perception is *prāpyakārin*. It starts from the *ātman*, and through the mind and senses comes into contact with the object, assumes its form and reveals the same. All perception is real. Even the so-called illusory perception has reality. Take, for instance, the silver-nacre example. In the nacre there is an element or aspect of real silver which accounts for the mistake. It is this fraction of real silver that is taken for silver. Nacre and silver have some common properties. Our perception of nacre as silver is not unreal, in so far as we have actually perceived the common properties. The physical stimulus from nacre is there, which is responsible for the mistake. Here we must take into account physics, physiology and psychology. For perception, one basis is the light vibrations, the sound vibrations etc., from the objects of perception. The physiological basis is the sensations and the stimuli. The psychological

basis is the consciousness. Rāmānuja's theory of perception accounts for the reality of all the bases, and synthesises these.

### 3. *Indeterminate and Determinate Perception*

According to Śaṅkara, the first stage of perception is Indeterminate Perception (I. P.), which is perception of mere existence or 'isness'. The second stage is Determinate Perception (D. P.), the perception of form and attribute (*jāti-guṇa*). I. P. is real, but D. P. is illusory.

Rāmānuja holds that at no stage is our perception devoid of attributes. There is no such perception as '*asti*'. Hence even I. P., the perception in the first instance, presents not bare existence, but the configuration or physical structure of the object with its differentiating features.

I. P. is not devoid of characteristics. There can be no perception which is absolutely negative with regard to manifestation of qualities. When a thing is perceived for the first time, and we say, 'It is so', the perception may be purely elementary, but some specific characters are discerned. At the first glimpse of an elephant, we try to run away, because we take it as an elephant and not as a cow. Hence some specific character, by which we designate an object as that object and not something different, is existent even in the I. P.

I. P. is, indeed, known to be the perception of what is devoid of some particular attributes or other, but not the perception of that which is devoid of all attributes ; because the perception of such a thing is not seen to occur at any time, and because also it is impossible. Surely, all cognition is produced in association with some defining attribute or other, so as to have the awareness that a particular thing is of a particular nature.

I. P. is outline perception—the first outline in relation to things which are of the same kind. The second and the following

perceptions possess the character of being definite. Thus, perception can never have for its object the thing which is devoid of attributes.

“Even if I. P. lasts for one moment, yet during that very moment, the generic properties which (for example) belong to the ox and other such objects, which are the same as distinctions, they are (all) apprehended.” I. P. of pure existence is a myth, because in that case there would result the contradiction of such definite cognitions as are realised in the instances, ‘A jar exists’ and ‘A cloth exists’.

If differentiation, which is a thing other than pure existence, and consists of generic properties and such other attributes as go to make up the configuration of things, be not apprehended by perception, why does one who is in quest of a horse turn away at the sight of a buffalo? Hence there is no such thing as perception of pure existence. Rāmānuja substantiates this point by his further presumption that individuals alone are real and that there is no class-essence in them, although there is resemblance (*sādṛśya*) in the individuals in the shape of configuration (*saṁsthāna*) among the individuals.

#### 4. *Intuitive Perception*

Intuitive Perception is the highest type of perception. It is the fundamental type of cognition capable of apprehending the reality. Hence it is designated as insight into reality. Herein, the individual is not influenced by *karma*, *vāsanā* or any defect of the body or senses. He is free from ignorance and the limitations of the body which is a product of *karma*. This perception does not need the physical senses, and hence it is called divine perception (*divya-pratyakṣa*). It is representative in character. From the point of view of distinctness and immediacy, it is in no way inferior to ordinary perception.

The means of attaining divine perception are divine grace which is invoked by acts of daily worship and meditation bearing the character of devotion.

### 5. *Conation*

Rāmānuja lays due emphasis on the conative aspect of the human personality. He grants to the individual soul freedom to act according to its own will. Here God is the prototype of the individual, who, however, is responsible for all his acts, good or bad. For this the law of *karma* is there, as an administrative principle of God to control sins. Man can misuse his will, and the evil fruit of his misuse is there to check the same. Hence, the will must be guided by ethical principles. The sublimation of the will is its dedication to the service of the Lord who is the Master. The individual will must be surrendered to the divine will.

### 6. *Affection*

Rāmānuja lays the greatest emphasis on the affective side of personality. Cognition and conation are subservient to it. It is this aspect that leads to the highest spiritual fulfilment. The best means of training the affective side is devotion (*bhakti*). 'It is a surging emotion which thrills the whole frame, chokes speech and leads to trance.' It is the highest form of love—sublimated love. All good emotions culminate in love. The devotee directs his love of worldly things to *Īśvara*. He gets the highest happiness in the presence of his beloved Lord. He is prepared to undergo any suffering for the sake of Divine Love. That way *bhakti* is not mere emotionalism, but includes the training of the will as well as the intellect. The state of devotion includes a number of emotions and cognitive and volitional acts. On the emotional side, it includes the longing for *Īśvara* and for nothing else (*vimoka*), wishing good to others (*kalyāṇa*), compassion



(*dayā*), non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and cheerfulness (*anavasāda*). On the cognitive side, it includes discrimination (*viveka*) and integrity (*ārjava*). On the conative side, it includes action (*kriyā*), practice (*abhyāsa*) and charity (*dāna*). Rāmānuja's *bhakti-yoga* lays emphasis on complete resignation to the Lord (*prapatti*), which invokes divine grace. Devotion, according to all the Vaiṣṇava philosophers, is the best means of not only training and sublimating the emotions, but also of uplifting the human personality. It leads to the emotional experience of the highest love, exquisite joy and pure delight. It cuts at the roots of the lower *tāmasika* emotions of anger, hatred, jealousy and passion, and develops the *sāttvika bhāvas* of love, cheerfulness (*prasāda*), sympathy (*karuṇa*) and kindness (*dayā*).

#### E. RESUME

Vedānta presents a vast philosophical superstructure on the foundations of the *Upaniṣads*. The psychology in the *Upaniṣads* is therefore repeated in Vedānta, with greater details about each topic. While Advaita Vedānta twists the *Upaniṣad* psychology in the direction of *māyāvāda* (which is against the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*), Vaiṣṇava Vedānta faithfully carries the *Upaniṣad* philosophy and psychology further and understands the *Brahma Sūtra* in the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*. Thibaut rightly points out that Rāmānuja was more faithful to Bādarāyaṇa in his interpretation of the *Brahma Sūtra* than Śaṅkara was, who revived the *Upaniṣads* on Buddhist lines. S. N. Dasgupta also points out that Śaṅkara's philosophy is largely a compound of the *viññāna-vāda* and *śūnyavāda* of Buddhism with the *Upaniṣadic* notion of the permanence of Self superadded. No wonder, if the celebrated philosopher, Viññānabhikṣu, called Śaṅkara a hidden Buddhist. But Rāmānuja retains the realism of the other *āstika* philosophies and synthesises the various currents of Vedic ritualism, *Bhāgavata*

devotion, South Indian philosophy of the Āzhvārs and the Monism of Vedānta.

Rāmānuja's special contribution is therefore, in the following directions. He divested Vedāntic philosophy of Buddhist influence, and while calling the universe a real appearance, made psychology the study of a real mind reacting to a real world. He synthesised Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Mimāṃsa, taking the best from each:

He did not ignore or minimise the importance of the ethical and aesthetic sides of life, but emphasised the volitional and aesthetic aspects of human behaviour, pointing towards the higher goal of the human will. He laid the greatest stress on the affective side of personality (in contrast to the mere intellectualism of Śaṅkara) and pointed towards devotion as the highest means of the sublimation of emotions. He gave an intelligible explanation of consciousness which he calls an attribute of the self (and not identical with the self). He presents a realistic explanation of perception and divests Advaita perception of its pure metaphysics. He discusses the superconscious state (*yogī-pratyakṣa*) and thus presents a complete picture of consciousness, with all its levels and degrees. Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita represents all the three schools (Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita and Bhedābheda) of Vaiṣṇava Vedānta as far as the psychological principles are concerned, and hence there is no need to refer to Madhva, Nimbārka or Bhāskara and their followers.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. Primary Sources :

1. *Ātmasiddhi* of Yāmunācārya.
2. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.
3. *Saryārtha-siddhi* of Vedānta Deśika.
4. *Satadūṣaṇi* of Vedānta Deśika.

5. *Seṣvaramimāṃsā* of Vedānta Deśika.
6. *Tātparya-candrikā* of Vedānta Deśika.
7. *Sri Bhāṣya* of Rāmānujācārya.
8. *Vedārtha Saṅgraha* of Rāmānujācārya.
9. *Yatindra Matadipikā* of Śrinivāsācārya.

**B. Secondary Sources :**

10. Bharatan Kumarappa : *The Hindu Concept of Deity as culminating in Rāmānuja*. London 1934.
11. E. B. Cowell & A. E. Gough : *Sarvadarśana Saṅgraha* of Mādhavācārya, London 1904.
12. Govindācārya Swāmin : *Metaphysique of Mysiticism of Rāmānuja*.
13. Mallik, G. N., *The Philosophy of Vaiṣṇava Religions* : Lahore 1927.
14. Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy* - Vol. II - India 1931.
15. Rangacharya : *The Vedānta Sūtra with the Sri Bhāṣya* of Rāmānujācārya, Madras (1961-65).
16. Safaya, Raghunath : *Indian Psychology*, Delhi 1975.
17. Sampatkumaran, M. R., *The Gītā Bhāṣya of Rāmānuja*, Madras 1969.
18. Srinivasa Iyengar, P. T., *Yatindramatadipikā*, Madras 1912.
19. Thibaut, George : *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary of Rāmānuja*, S. B. E., Oxford 1904.
20. Vasudev, A. S. : *The Teachings of Vedānta according to Rāmānuja*, Vienna, 1908.
21. Varadachari, K. C. : *Sri Rāmānuja's Theory of Knowledge*, Tirupati, 1943.

# The Prapatti-Mārga

DR. J. PARTHASARATHI, M.A., PH.D., Madras.

The Śrī-Vaiṣṇava faith is usually referred to as '*prapatti-mārga*', and a Śrī-Vaiṣṇava following this '*mārga*' or path is called a '*prapanna*'. These terms serve to indicate the specialised way of life that Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism has developed for itself, as part of the larger *Sanātana Dharma*, embracing a variety of beliefs and practices under the common banner of the *Vedas*. Hinduism has ever been a religio-social federation, promoting the utmost diversity of faith and life within an over-all framework of certain well-understood basic values and principles of conduct. Not only have the major paths of devotion in Hinduism like Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta evolved on different lines down the centuries, but each major path has evolved subvarieties of different shades in consonance with local influences. Śaivism, for instance, has well-known subvarieties—*Pratyabhijñā-darsana* of Kashmir, *Vira-Śaivism* of Karnaṭaka, *Śaiva Siddhānta* of Tamil Nadu, as well as the *Śivādvaita* of Śrīkaṇṭha in the South. Vaiṣṇavism of the medieval age starts with the Rāmānujīya school and ramifies later into Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbārka, Viṣṇuswāmin and Chaitanya schools.

The *bhakti* tradition is a common inheritance of the southern and northern schools of Vaiṣṇavism ; it stems from ancient texts of the *Upaniṣads*, notably, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, the *Nārāyaṇīya* section and the *Bhagavadgītā* of the *Mahābhārata*,

the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada and Sāṇḍilya and the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*. The concept of '*bhakti*' in these texts has been studied by scholars, but no attempt seems to have been made so far to study the texts in an over-all framework noticing the resemblances and differences between these and the later-day devotional and philosophical literature of the various schools of Vaiṣṇavism. The Nārada and Sāṇḍilya *Sūtras* agree in defining *bhakti* as intense love for God, '*parama-prema-rūpā*' and '*parā-anurakti*'; the divisions of *bhakti* into 'primary' and 'secondary' that they make, are also similar. But there are differences in important matters. Sāṇḍilya feels that *bhakti* demands the cultivation of the intellect as well and should not conflict with '*ātmarati*' (love of the individual soul), while Nārada regards it as a self-justifying experience, a means and an end in one. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* stresses the supremacy of devotion in a number of contexts; its ninefold practice of *bhakti* (*navadhā-bhakti*) comprising *śravaṇa* (listening), *kīrtana* (chanting), *smaraṇa* (recollection), *pāda-sevana* (salutation of God's feet), *arcana* (following ritualistic worship), *vandana* (paying obeisance), *dāśya* (service), *sakhya* (friendship) and *ātmanivedana* (offering of one's self) is a well-known pronouncement on the practical aspects of devotion.

Theoretical statements on *bhakti* occur in the medieval literature of the northern schools of Vaiṣṇavism, the Chaitanya school is rich in this respect. One notable development under its auspices is the establishment of *bhakti* as a full-fledged *rasa* acceptable to the theoreticians of the *Alaṅkāra-śāstra* (or Rhetoric) by Rūpagōsvamin. In his *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu*, he shows that *bhakti-rasa* has its permanent emotion of *Bhagavad-rati* operating with the *ālambana* (support) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *uddīpana* (excitant) of singing His praise, dancing etc. and *anubhāvas* and *sañcāri-bhāvas* (attendant and fleeting emotions); it is therefore a '*paripūrṇa-rasa*', even as traditionally accepted *rasas* like

*śṛṅgāra* (love), *hāsyā* (humour), *karuṇā* (pathos), *vīra* (heroism), *raudra* (anger), *bibhatsa* (terror), *bhayānaka* (fear) and *adbhuta* (wonder) to which list *śānta* (tranquility) was later on added.

So much has been said by way of introduction to show that from the common inheritance of *bhakti*, the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava (or Rāmānujīya) school of Vaiṣṇavism (which is historically the earliest of the schools) has branched off to a special development in propounding '*prapatti*', which may be termed its distinguishing characteristic. The term '*prapatti*' literally means 'special acquirement or reaching (of God)'. It puts the accent on 'taking refuge' in Him. It is well known to the students of this faith that the formulation of its doctrines starts with Nāthamuni and passes through his grandson Yāmuna to Rāmānuja and his successors. Whether the concept of *prapatti* received any formal elaboration at the hands of Nāthamuni, the first *Ācārya*, is not known; though it undoubtedly must have formed part of the *bhakti-yoga* practised by him. The practice of *prapatti*, otherwise known as '*śaraṇāgati*' (going into refuge with God) cannot be denied to this *Ācārya* who is reputed to be the re-discoverer and ardent follower of the devotion of *Tiruvāymozhi* hailed as the '*Śaraṇāgatiśāstra*' (the treatise on refuge in God). Its author, Saint Ṣaṭakopa, is celebrated as the *prapanna-jana-kūṭastha* (the originator of the tribe of people practising *prapatti*) and the first *Ācārya*, Nāthamuni, who was his *bhakta* and to whom the world owes the institution of chanting his songs in temples must certainly have been a *prapanna-jana*.<sup>1</sup>

Yāmuna, heir to his grandfather Nāthamuni's *bhaktiyoga*, performs *prapatti* in his moving *Stotra-ratna*, a poem where Ṣaṭakopa's Tamil verses seeking refuge in the Lord, find clear echoes. The famous passage where he seeks refuge with the Lord comes to one's mind: "You are my father, loved

son, dear friend ; You are the friend and *guru* of the world as well. I am Yours, Your servant, one of Your retinue, I have sought refuge with You ; Yours is now the burden (of my welfare)".<sup>2</sup> The invocatory verse to the *Vaikunṭha Gadya* of Rāmānuja speaks of his bringing forth the gem called '*bhakti-yoga*' after immersing himself in the nectarine ocean of Yāmuna's works.<sup>3</sup> The term '*bhaktiyoga*' here—as Vedānta Deśika points out—is loosely used to include *prapatti* also, which follows in the *Gadya*.

Coming to Rāmānuja, it is well known that the great *Ācārya* uses the term '*bhakti*' in his works in an inclusive sense, comprehending *prapatti* in its scope. There is a direct mention of the word '*śaraṇāgati*' also in his *Śrībhāṣya*, (1. 4. 1).<sup>4</sup> As Prof. S. S. Raghavachar has pointed out, "The common practice among great *Ācāryas* is to effect their private and interior progress to realization and to state firmly and clearly only the final fruits of their realization", and the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*, embodying our *Ācārya*'s taking refuge in the Lord, surrendering unto Him all his burden (*bhara-samarpaṇa*), is his last word on *sādhanā* or means of realization of the Ultimate.<sup>5</sup> Details of his "private and interior progress to realization", hidden from our view, have to be gathered from authentic traditions of the incidents of his life. These speak of his acquiring the three great *mantrās*—*Aṣṭākṣari*, *Dvaya* and *Carama-śloka*—of *prapatti* from his teacher, Tirukkōṣṭiyūr Nambī, after passing the severest tests of fitness to receive such instruction. The secrets of the *prapatti* doctrine were handed down from teacher to pupil and the *prapatti* experience was an integral part of the life of an initiated Śrī-Vaiṣṇava from the earliest period. Besides Tirukkōṣṭiyūr Nambī, Rāmānuja's other teachers were instrumental in equipping him with practical knowledge of the *prapatti* experience gleaned from the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyana*, the *Dīvya Prabandha* and other sources.

Enough has been said to show that an undercurrent of *prapatti* was flowing in the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava devotional life from the days of the first *Ācārya*, though initially it appears to have been comprehended in the larger term '*bhakti*'. Rāmānuja's personal example of dedication to the Lord and large-hearted identification with His devotees, irrespective of their background, must have been greatly influential in the centuries after him, when we meet with clear doctrinal formulation of *prapatti* as well as the formation of a community of dedicated souls—'*prapanna-kula*'. We see the elaboration of the concept of *prapatti* with examples from the *Smṛtis* and *Itihāsas*, and its demarcation from *bhakti*; the *prapattimārga* is identified as the Vaiṣṇava way of life and the *prapanna-kula* evolved as a 'brotherhood of men of God', totally rejecting the caste organization associated with ordinary *varṇāśrama* and Vaidika standards of behaviour.

The annihilation of distinctions in the face of intense dedication and surrender to a chosen God and the constitution of a super-society of such God-men have had revolutionary implications in terms of the uplift of Indian society in the past; the liberalising effect they brought on, continues to animate modern Indian life, notwithstanding the threat posed by new trends to their area of operation. The distinctiveness of the *prapanna* community will be brought home by a story current in later Vaiṣṇava tradition. Villiputtūr-p-pakavar, an ascetic *ṭiyar*, used to bathe in a river ghat removed from the one where Brahmins and others usually bathed: when he was questioned about this curious practice, he replied: "We are devotees bound in service to Viṣṇu (*Viṣṇudāśas*); you Brahmins are followers of *varṇa-dharma*. There is no connection between our orientation to wait on the Lord (*dāsa-vṛtti*) and your bent of mind".<sup>6</sup>

It is a matter of common knowledge that certain differences in interpretational refinements of the concept of *prapatti* came to



prominence in the post-Rāmānuja era of Vaiṣṇava history, leading to the split into the northern and southern sects. These do not concern us here. Both are agreed in exalting *prapatti* to a higher status than that of the ordinary *vaidikadharma*. There is a considerable literature on the subject in the writings of *Ācāryas* of both sects. Vedānta Deśika is hailed as having established the independent validity of *prapatti* in his writings in both Sanskrit and Tamil like *Nyāsa-vimśati*, *Nyāsa-tilaka*, *Nikṣeparakṣā*, *Rahasya-traya-sāra*, *Aḍaikkalappattu* etc. Pillai Lokācārya and his brother Azhakiya-maṇavālapperumāl Nāyanar have done similar service in their works, the *Śrīvacana-bhūṣaṇa* and *Ācārya-hṛdaya*. Textual studies of how *prapatti* is defined, distinguished and illustrated in works of teachers belonging to both sects are of great relevance to all interested in Vaiṣṇavism. The attempt made below is to set out the exposition on the nature of the '*prapanna-kula*' and '*prapatti*' given in *Ācārya Hṛdaya* and *Śrīvacana-bhūṣaṇa*, two classics highly venerated and studied by the *kālakṣepa* method in the southern (Ten-kalai) tradition, and then comment on certain points emerging therefrom.

The *Ācārya-hṛdaya* expounds the parallelism of the Drāviḍa *Veda* of Nammāzhvār with the Sanskrit *Veda* in detail. As a prelude thereto, it speaks of the community of '*prapannas*' (or Vaiṣṇavas, as distinct from the general run of Brāhmaṇas) of which Nammāzhvār is the originator (*kūṭastha*). The paths of Brahmins who follow the *varṇa-dharma* of the *śāstras* diverge from those of *prapanna* Vaiṣṇavas who follow the *Tirunantira* ('*Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya*') revealed by the Lord Himself with special solicitude for the uplift of human souls. The following antithetical aspects of the two paths have been enumerated with telling effect in this work. Reference is given to the number of the *cūrṇikā* or section in it after each paragraph.

*The s̥āstraic path :*

1. The *s̥āstras*, as revealed by Vyāsa and other sages, are meant to appeal to human beings in their physical condition, implying a gradation of steps suitable for worldly men to climb up. (17)

2. As *s̥āstraic* knowledge is addressed to the external nature of man as a physical being, a number of qualifications are imposed on the aspirant ; for example, he should be worthy, free of blemishes etc., which are obviously difficult of attainment. (18)

3. These who cling to *s̥āstras* are like people who in mid-water hold on to a buoy or float and swim to safety by their effort and consequential God's grace. (19)

4. The followers of *s̥āstras* understand by their learning that the soul, while remaining subservient to God, has powers of cognition, action and enjoyment and can attempt by its efforts to cross the ocean of life. Here, the feeling of possession of powers of enjoyment by the individual urges him to activity on his own initiative. (20)

5. As a result of the realization of subservience to God (*śeṣatva*) and power of understanding to act and enjoy fruits of action (*bhoktṛtva*), the followers of the *s̥āstras* and the *upāsanas* laid down therein, perform their *karma* or duties prescribed in the *s̥āstras* for their respective *varṇas* which (from an absolute standpoint) are unreal (*asatya*) and unenduring (*anitya*). (25-26).

6. *Karma* or *varṇāśrama* bound action takes its inspiration from the rules of the *s̥āstras*. *Upāsakas* or devotees, bound by Vedic injunctions, resort to *karma* which is performed to the one God who stands as the Inner Controller of all deities and confers fruits suitably. (26-27)

7. The path of *karma* is a general (non-specific) means for reaching God. (30)

8. There are differences of prescribed *dharma*s relating to caste (*varṇa*), state of life (*āśrama*) and rules of sacrifices applicable to those who follow the path of *karma*. (31)

9. A Brāhmaṇa's superior birth is by his initiation into *Gāyatrī*, the mother of (Vedic) metres (*chandas*). (33)

10. People following *śāstras* are called 'Andaṇar' (Brāhmaṇas) and 'maraiyor' (followers of *Veda*). (34)

11. Names of followers of *śāstras* are according to their village and clan, which are categories based on physical existence. (35)

12. For the originators (*kūṭasthas*) of their *gotra*, *carāṇa* and *sūtra* among Brāhmaṇas are Parāśara, Pārāśarya and Bodhāyana and such like sages. (36)

13. Brāhmaṇa-hood is realised by reciting, understanding and acting according to the *Vedas*. (37)

The 'Tirumantira' path or 'Prapanna' way :

1. The *Tirumantira* revealed by the Lord Himself in Badarikāśrama as the quintessence of the *śāstras*, is meant for the uplift of men in their essential spiritual state bereft of restrictions of the body (implying that it constitutes quintessential knowledge meant to yield the quickest effect). (17)

2. As *Tirumantira* knowledge is addressed to the inner soul of a person, it calls for earnest desire (*śraddhā*) only, on the part of the aspirant, and all with sincere aspirations become qualified for it, irrespective of other requirements. (18)

3. Those blessed with the quintessential knowledge (of absolutely taking refuge in the Lord taught by *Tirumantira*)

are like people scated in a boat, free of worry about their own effort and consequential grace of God ; (secure in the protection of God) they think only of reaching His shore soon. (19)

4. The devotees of the *Tirumantira* realize that the human soul is meant for the enjoyment of its Maker and is utterly dependent on Him. Throwing the whole burden of their life on Him, they entertain no thought of any efforts of their own. Here, the inmost feeling that the Great Enjoyer, God, chooses the individual for His own pleasure and that it is not given to the latter to get at Him, makes for the cessation of self-effort. (20)

5. As a result of the cessation of self-effort on the part of those with quintessential knowledge (*sārajñas*), their powers of knowledge and action are merged in *kaiṅkarya* (loving service in tune with God's will) befitting the real and ever-enduring state of subordination to Godhead characteristic of the individual soul. (25-26)

6. *Kaiṅkarya* (or service to the Lord in tune with His will) takes its inspiration from the love flowing from God-experience (of the individual soul). It is performed to the easily accessible form of the Lord, overflowing with grace, the *arcāvatāra* or God as manifest in images in temples. (26-27)

7. *Kaiṅkarya* is a special (specific) way of realising God. (30)

8. The differences applicable to the followers of *karma* drop off by themselves in respect of one engaged in the intimate service of the Lord, just as an article held in the hands of a person gone to sleep slips off involuntarily. (37)

9. The superior birth for one devoted to *kaiṅkarya* is by initiation into the *Tirumantira*, which is the mother of even the *Gāyatrī mantra*, and more beneficial to one than even his own mother. (33)

10. People following *Tirumantira* are called 'aḍiyār' (dedicated ones) and 'toṇḍar' (servants). (34)

11. *Prapannas* feel that their line of descent is from Nārāyaṇa Himself and that mention of physical affiliations of village and clan will tarnish their blemishless connection with God.<sup>7</sup> Therefore they are known by the various shrines of God with which they are associated. (35)

12. The originators (*kūṭasthas*) of the *gotra*, *carāṇa* and *sūtra* of *prapannas* are Parāṅkuṣa (Nammāzhvār), Parakāla (Tirumaṅgai Āzhvār) and Yativara (Rāmānuja) and such like God-men. (36)

13. Vaiṣṇava-hood is realised by reciting, understanding and acting according to the thousand stanzas (of the *Tiruvāymozhi*). (37).

It will be clear from the contrasts made by the author of the *Ācārya Hṛdaya* that the *prapanna* is a *sārajña*, a person of quintessential knowledge, one who has by conscious choice assimilated the ultimate truth that the human soul is the wealth of its Master and is therefore content to serve Him in utter self-abnegation, resigning his all unto Him. He is bound in loving service to the *arcā* form of the Lord in which He resides in consecrated images of temples, making Himself easy to worship and conferring on humanity the unique experience of a direct communion with Him. The adherence to *kainkarya* as both means and end, separates the *prapannas* from the *karma*-bound Vedic *sādhakas* and the story of Villiputtūr-pakavar seeking a separate river-ghat for his bath underlines this basic difference in orientation.

From the community of *prapannas* we may turn to the act of *prapatti* itself as expounded in the *Srī-vacana-bhūṣaṇa* of Pillai Lokācārya, (sections 23 to 114 of Chapter I). The

performance of *prapatti*, involving taking absolute refuge in the Lord, abandoning all thought of self-effort, has no limiting conditions except one. There is no restriction about place (like sacred shrines etc.), time (like spring, morning or evening), manner (like performance after purificatory bath or some offering), competence of person (as that he should belong to one caste or another) and fruit attainable (like a specified result). The only limitation is about the person to whom *prapatti* should be offered.

In respect of each statement made above, authorities from Vedic and allied sources can be quoted. When Vibhīṣaṇa performed *śaraṇāgati* before Rāma, Hanumān's advice was that he, along with the time and place of his surrender, should be accepted as they were. It is also clear from the first word 'Sṛimad' in 'Sṛīman-Nārāyaṇa' (meaning 'for ever present with Lakṣmī or Śrī') that Lakṣmī is ever present with the Lord as an interceder on behalf of any human soul, whenever it chooses to offer *prapatti* to the Master. Draupadī surrendered herself in prayer to Kṛṣṇa when she was in an impure state; Arjuna was given the teaching of *prapatti* in the midst of mean folk indifferent to God. No limitation of manner of performance can be inferred from the fact that Rāma, when he sought refuge with the Ocean-God by prostrating before him as a suppliant, obeyed formalities like facing the eastern direction; He performed them voluntarily as befitting his royal lineage, and others are free to surrender themselves unto God according to their own inclinations and convenience.

All sorts of beings, regardless of distinctions, have performed *prapatti*. A Kṣatriya like Dharmaputra, a woman like Draupadī a *deva* in disguise committing heinous offence like Kākāsura, a serpent and enemy of man like Kāṣīya, Gajendra the elephant king and *bhakta*, a Rākṣasa like

Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāma Himself, Lakṣmaṇa, living beings of all classes and types have surrendered themselves in *prapatti*, proving that there is no condition of competency for a person performing *prapatti*.

The aims of *prapatti* may differ as a kingdom for Dharmaputra, clothes for Draupadī, escaping death for Kākāsura and Kāṭiya, worshipful service of the Lord for Gajendra, attainment of the kingdom of Laṅkā (and later of Rāma's divine abode) for Vibhīṣaṇa, crossing the ocean for Rāma and following Rāma as a loving servant for Lakṣmaṇa. In view of these vastly differing aims there is no restriction about the objective of the performance of *prapatti*.

The only limitation, about the person to whom *prapatti* should be offered, is intended to ensure that it should be made to a worthy aspect of Godhead, full of perfections. Of the five states in which God unfolds Himself—*Para* (Transcendent Form), *Vyūha* (Form in Milky Ocean), *Vibhava* (descent as man), *Antaryāmin*, (Indwelling Spirit) and *Arcā* (*Vigrahas* or images of temples)—it is only in the state of *arcā* (where He is present in consecrated images in the holy shrines of our land) that His beneficent attributes, which defy description even by the All-knowing One Himself, manifest themselves. As the *Upaniṣad* puts it, the fullness of God's beneficent attributes is such that even if the fullness is taken away from it, the original fullness remains as such, unaffected.<sup>8</sup>

A doubt may be raised about the superiority of the *arcā* form to that of *paratva* (transcendent embodiment of perfection of Godhead). Though qualities like love and accessibility to men may be present in the *paratva* state, they are weak and flickering, like lights dimmed by daylight, for the principal objects of God's favour in that transcendent state are the denizens of God's own Abode who have attained divinity

themselves. It is only in the *arcā* state that He lavishes His looks of grace on the lowliest of the earth, lost in the cycle of births and deaths. The greatness of this state is that His qualities of accessibility and compassion shine forth, like the glow of a lamp in a dark room. God subordinates His omnipotence and all-perfect nature to assume the *arcā* form, dependent for maintenance on the attentions of ministering priests of temples and on the offerings of earthly devotees, even when, instead of being attracted by His ready presence and loving contact, mortals are indifferent to Him.

The *arcā* state of God as images in temples and homes satisfies most the devotee who longs intensely to realise His presence at once, being like pools of water giving immediate relief to the extremely thirsty. The other states of God are, as compared with this, unhelpful to the seeker of God. The *antaryāmin* (indwelling) state is like underground water which the thirsty one cannot use without strenuous digging. The *para* (transcendent) state is like water enveloping the universe which man cannot use. The *vyūha* (constituent self) state is like the Milky Ocean which is unapproachable to men. The *vibhava* (descent on earth) state of *avatāras* is like rivers in spate, now extinct and of no use to men. Only the *arcā* state where God dwells in consecrated images is useful to men to offer themselves in the surrender of *prapatti*, even as tanks of water which have collected from extinct rivers in spate.

Before the immediate presence of the Lord in consecrated images, the devotee surrenders himself absolutely in *prapatti*. The *adhikārins* or persons competent for doing *prapatti* to the *arcā* state embrace all humanity which may be divided into three classes : (i) those without the '*jñāna*' or learning and capacity to take to *bhakti* and other prescribed *sādhana*s as means of attaining the Lord ; (ii) those gifted with *jñāna* but having



the greater wisdom to realise that *sādhana*s are opposed to the essential nature of the soul, making it incumbent on one to take to the absolute surrender of *prapatti* as sole refuge; and (iii) those who lose themselves in God-love and in the surfeit of such love, become incapable of pursuing any of the *sādhana*s.

Examples of the first type are people like us, the generality of mankind; those of the second type are *Ācāryas* of old who were gifted with greater *jñāna* than usually given to men but forsook the same; and those of the third type are the *Āzhvārs* who were so intoxicated with God-love as to lose their physical identity in their over-flowing divine passion. Each class above-mentioned, shares in some measure the characteristics of others so that the object of the demarcation is only to underline the predominance of a particular characteristic in a class.

The dominating characteristics of the three classes are connected with matter (*prakṛti*), spirit (*ātman*) and God (*Bhagavān*). They may together apply to one and the same person as in *Nammāzhvār* who breaks down in his utter ecstasy of devotion, exclaiming, “Can I help anything at all?” Here we may assume that the *Āzhvār* first speaks of his want of knowledge and capacity to take to *bhakti* and other *sādhana*s. When he is reminded that he does possess knowledge and capacity, he says that these only serve to make clear to him that the essence of his being is absolute dependence on God and that he is consequently helpless in doing anything. Thirdly, the knowledge he has is only overwhelming love for the Lord, which sets at naught prescribed observances and makes him helpless.

The *Āzhvār*’s ecstatic passion for the Lord is disturbed by efforts seeking His instant presence and even reproaching His delay in coming. These stirrings are overflowings of intense identification with Him, and this sort of *prapatti* is like the

anxious prayer of a grown-up son, asking his father, whose nature is ever to hover round his son with solicitude in constant vigil, to declare : “ I will protect you ”.

The real nature of *prapatti* is such that it cannot brook being termed a method (*upāya*) to reach God ; a sacrifice of all tendencies that can be described in any sense as effort (or *sādhana*) is its distinguishing characteristic. God may be called ‘ realised effort ’ (*siddhopāya*), while *bhakti* and other śāstraic *upāsanas* are known as ‘ effort for realisation ’ (*sādhyopāya*). *Prapatti* which is absolute refuge in the Realized Effort cannot be called in any sense an effort (*upāya*). But, should there not be some requirement on the part of man to be eligible to achieve His presence ? Only two things are necessary: first, a clear realization that man’s soul is ever the Lord’s own and that it is under His eternal protection ; second, non-rejection, in any way, of the protection which He is bestowing unconditionally on man for ever. God is the Supreme Master (*śeṣhin*) and unconditional means of realization (*nirapekṣa-upāya*) for the human soul. He takes it upon Himself as a matter of privilege to guide and protect man regardless of any effort on the latter’s part.

All that is required of man is not to get a wrong notion that he can please God by his effort and secure deliverance. In this effort to do away with one sorrow, he invites a greater sorrow, offending against the inner essence of his being which demands absolute surrender to Him. If only man gives up his misdirected effort and puts himself in tune with the protection coming from God by resignation to His will, God will automatically take over his protection. This consent to protection by God on the part of the individual cannot be considered as *sādhana* (or *upāya*), for it is a common pre-requisite for any attempt to get at any result. It figures in the stage of

achievement of release as well when the individual consents to follow God's pleasure. Consent is inherent in human personality ever subject to a greater power controlling it. Further, consent is the inseparable result of the power of choice distinguishing the conscious being from inert matter. The possession of consciousness by a human being finds its fruition in the grateful recollection of God's benefaction and in feeling delight in serving Him and receiving His approbation.

Nothing that the individual possesses or attempts to do, is a means of his reaching God. As the Āzhvārs beseech Him, asking, "What have You in Your mind for me?" it is the thought in God's mind that is the means for uplifting an individual. That thought is for ever present. Then the question arises: Why does it take time to fructify? Only when the individual's thought of self-protection changes, does God's thought about him become active. When an ailing Śrivaishṇava devotee asked Nañjiyar, 'What should be the refuge for one's last days', he replied: "It is simply abandoning all worry about one's refuge, confidently leaving everything in the hands of God"! For it is not the individual soul but God who is the Receiver, the Redeemer and Master. It is He who feels pleased at the redemption of an individual, as a Master rejoices at regaining a treasure that seemed lost.

How can an individual get rid of a sense of self-effort and self-seeking? By contemplating one's state of eternal dependence (*pāraṭanṭrya*) on his Father, thought of self-effort will cease; by contemplating one's existence as the liege and property of the great Lord (*śeṣatva*), thought of seeking anything for oneself in isolation from the Lord will cease. Then it may well be asked: why is the individual endowed with a sense of self-effort and self-consciousness? The answer is that the power of one's self-effort finds its justification in using it in the cause of the

TFN  
1259

Supreme One for His service ; the power of one's self-consciousness finds its justification in the delight experienced in winning God's pleasure by service to Him.

Acno 17353

Though the human soul is endowed with both capacity for knowledge (*jñātṛtva*) and servitude to the Lord (*śeṣatva*), the former stands subordinate to the latter. While the possession of capacity for knowledge separates the human soul from insentient Nature, servitude to the Lord is the attribute required to separate it from God who also has knowledge. Servitude to the Lord is an inherent characteristic of the human soul. The feeling of independence or the separate existence of an 'I' and of attachment to objects other than the Lord (*anyaśeṣatva*) are just superimpositions on the individual's essential nature, born of *avidyā* or ignorance. One prevents the emergence of the natural sense of dependence on the Lord ; the other misdirects the sense of dependence, deflecting it from the Lord to whom alone it should be attached. If the superimposition of the "I" feeling is swept away by the teaching of the beneficent *ācārya*, the soul is left in its essence, to be known by its indestructible name as the servant (*aḍḍiān*) of the Great Master. This servant of God should not be described in terms of village or community (which cause a sense of separateness of the "I" and violate the nature of the inner soul), but in terms of his dependence on Viṣṇu, as the *Pāñcarātra* says. <sup>9</sup>

Examples of *prapannas* placing themselves absolutely at the Lord's disposal are : *Śitā* who was endowed with the power to destroy *Rāvaṇa*, her tormentor, by her mere will, but yet surrendering her power of action to her Lord, waited for His succour : *Draupadī* who was not endowed with power like *Śitā*, but who abandoned all thought of even saving her modesty as her dress was being stripped from her and threw up her hands

in despair, putting the burden of saving her on the Lord; and Tirukkaṇṇa-maṅgai-āṇḍān, who happened to see a human master's sacrifice of his own self for saving his pet dog and taking the cue therefrom, absolutely surrendered himself to his Master, the Lord at Tirukkaṇṇamangai temple and laid himself down in a small room of the temple-tower, taking no thought for himself and ceasing all self-activity.

*Prapatti*, before attaining God, demands surrender of one's power of action and anxiety for preserving anything, even womanly modesty and self-effort, as explained above. After realization of the Lord's presence, it demands abounding love (that expresses itself in doing all kinds of service to the Lord as Lakṣmaṇa did for Rāma), self-sacrifice in the service of the Lord (that expresses itself in utter disregard of one's body as Pillai Tiru-naraiyūrar exhibited who perished with his family in protecting the *arcā* form of God in Tirunārāyaṇapuram when enemies set fire to the temple there), and consuming desire for enjoying His presence (that expresses itself in the very life-breath leaving the body under strain of the pangs of separation from Him, as it happened with the cowherd maid, Cintayanti, while she contemplated on Lord Kṛṣṇa playing the flute, unable to partake in His *rāsa-līlā* by restrictions at home). Giving up one's body for God is prescribed as a means or *sādhana* in some *purāṇas* and *ītiḥāsas*: but here, in the stage of enjoyment of God, it arises out of overflowing love, beyond the volition of the individual. The man who practises self-sacrifice as a *sādhana* may have the choice to do it or not, but not so one who is beside himself in love with Godhead; he cannot but act in self-effacement in the cause of the highest and dearest. Whatever is done out of sheer love without any ulterior motive cannot be classified as an observance with a purpose (*upāya*).

Great *prapannas* like the Āzhvārs whose passion for God breaks all bounds, take recourse to acts like fasting or blaming the Lord in public for His delay in granting His love, or sending appeals to lesser gods like Kāmadeva to lead them to the Master. Their burning devotion and surrender to the Lord know no limitations. On the surface, they seem to violate the one-pointed means, goal and worship that *prapatti* demands. But such acts, seemingly done in ignorance, really result from intense devotion, a form of mature knowledge ; they add lustre to *prapatti* itself. Far from being a hindrance to God's grace, these devotional excesses must be held to result from His own will ; they are like acts of service, pleasurable to God in the stage of realization.

Infatuation with God is at the root of all the spiritual virtues of the *prapanna* ; his love for the Divine form is such that all the fleeting pleasures of the senses have no power to attract him. Chief among spiritual qualities are *śama* (control of the inner senses) and *dama* (control of the outflowing senses) ; the cultivation of these qualities leads him to a spiritual preceptor (*ācārya*). With the acquisition of the preceptor, he acquires also the *Tiru-mantira* (*Oṁ Namo Nārāyaṇāya*) which leads him to God's Abode (Vaikuṇṭha). Qualities of self-control are desirable for wealth-seekers, devotees of God as well as *prapannas* with absolute self-surrender to God. The last-mentioned group requires these qualities more than the others. For while others need only abstain from indulgences prohibited in *śāstras* like resort to other women etc., the *prapanna* has to avoid even a practice sanctioned by the *śāstras* for the householder, like indulgence with his own wife. One who has placed himself absolutely in the hands of God should consider none else except God whose liege he is, as his object of adoration and enjoyment. With *prapannas* like the Āzhvārs who have revelled in God-experience, the matchless beauty of His form is so

absorbing to them that nothing else can attract them. For *prapannas* like the great *ācāryas*, God's own grace served to cut off their attachment to all sensuous enjoyment. For *prapannas* like us, ordinary folk, the contemplation of the conduct of realized souls spurs the desire to avoid enjoyments of the senses.

When the pleasures of the senses are spurned, there is doubtless a perception of their deficiencies and faults, but this is not the primary reason for discarding them. Basically, they are incompatible with the soul's realization of its attachment to the Lord as its sole Master and Enjoyer. Going further, the attachment to the Lord on the part of the individual is an inevitable concomitant of its basic make-up (*svarūpa*) ; it cannot be held to be the result of any admiration of the noble qualities of the Lord. For we find that even when faults are found in God, great *prapannas* like the *Āzhvārs* declare that their hearts know no other refuge except Him. Similarly, even when worldly life is realized to be full of sorrow, people do not turn away from it but rather revel in it, thus proving that attachment to an object is not dependent on its qualities.

The sense of attachment and consequent services to God arising from an individual's basic make-up (*svarūpa*) naturally takes precedence over the feeling of attachment and service that base themselves on the beneficent qualities of God. As examples, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā may be cited. Though the former stated outwardly that "he was Rāmā's younger brother, attracted to his service by his noble qualities",<sup>10</sup> he was born with a sense of service (*kaiṅkarya*), even as the *tulsi* plant sprouts from the ground with sweet fragrance. When Anasūyā in sage Atri's *āśrama* commended Sītā's action in accompanying her husband to the forest, the latter declared : "The world imagines me as being attached to Rāmā because of his noble virtues. If on any

occasion his virtues can stand separated from him, I will be able to show to the world that I will be still attached to him as ever. Unfortunately, such an occasion never arises, as he is always an ocean of auspicious virtues as well as the exemplar of beauty."

Why is *prapatti* preferable to other methods (*upāyas*) like *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*? This question is answered in detail in Chapter II of *Śrī-vacana-bhūṣaṇa*. The real reason is that these other methods do not fit in with the individual's essential nature of dependence on the Lord. If the abandonment of other methods is due to the lack of the *jñāna* (knowledge) and *śakti* (capacity) necessary, it will land one in the position of a compulsion to follow these methods when *jñāna* and *śakti* become available. These paths can be rejected outright, only when they are considered as opposed to the individual's basic nature.

Methods other than *prapatti* — *upāsana*s and *bhakti* — are meant only for those who do not know that the individual's essential nature of dependence on God will not tolerate any effort on its own to save itself. For those who know the real nature of the soul, these methods are dangerous, for they are destructive of its basic state (*svarūpa*). Nammāzhvar, for instance, exclaims to God: "Do You wish to turn me away from You by showing me a path (where, caught in the tangle and stress of observing rules, I shall fail in my object)?"

As per old authoritative works, observances of *upāsana*, *bhakti* etc., are reputed to cause fear as well as grief. The *Lakṣmī-tantra*, a *Pañcarātra* work, speaks of rites of atonement when a *prapanna*, by mistake, slips into non-*prapatti* ways, implying that these are destructive of the soul's essential nature. As Tirukkurukai-p-pillānpirān used to put it, the ways involving a sense of the individual's importance (*ahamkāra*) are like pure



water in a golden pot, sullied by a drop of *madirā* (wine). Further, the effort made by an individual through *bhakti* and *upāsana* is far from equal to the fruit aimed at, even as persons get costly gems in exchange for ordinary trinkets from men in some islands or a whole kingdom in exchange for a lemon fruit from royal patrons. The individual being wholly the possession of the Lord, he has nothing of his own to offer the Master, not even a small piece of cloth or lemon which the ordinary suppliant may give an earthly benefactor. If the individual gives any of God's gifts back to the Master Himself, it is just returning His property and will not be the means of earning His favour. If one gives any of God's gifts as though it were his own, it will be just theft which will be out in no time. It is as if a person stole a jewel of Śrī Raṅganātha, well-known to His devotees in Śrīraṅgam, and got caught red-handed while audaciously presenting it to the Lord as his own gift in public assembly. *Bhakti* is a blessed experience vouchsafed by the grace of God; if the individual makes this a method of bargaining with Him further, it is as absurd as if a wife after availing herself of the pleasure of sleeping with her husband by night, were to ask for wages for the same.

Then, why does the *Vedānta* prescribe *bhakti* as a *sādhana*? Like solicitous mothers who administer medicines mixed with sugar to unwilling children, the *Vedānta* has prescribed *bhakti* initially to appease the natural craving for self-effort of the individual, so that even through practising *bhakti* he may experience the bliss of God. Slowly, he may realize that it is the element of God-experience and not his *bhakti*-effort that is giving him the bliss he sought, and straightway take refuge in God both as means and end. The fact that *bhakti* or *upāsana* is prescribed by the *Vedas* cannot be an argument for its adoption by a *prapanna*. For the object of the *Vedas* is to lead men from lower steps like sacrifices that give them satisfaction and trust in

the truth of Vedic pronouncements at that level, to higher levels of pure contemplation and *prapatti* which are meant for the highest seeker. Ritual sacrifices involving hurt to animals and practised by people habituated to bodily pleasure have their bad effects only at a superficial level, as compared with the deeper harm done by *bhakti* or *upāsana* practices. The former touch only the skin ; the latter penetrate the heart, as they are based on a sense of “I” (*ahaṁkāra*) and destroy the soul’s essential nature. Further, these cause suffering to the seeker after God as they demand performance of a number of prescribed observances.

The *prapatti-mārga* has none of the deficiencies pointed out above. It is in tune with the individual’s basic make-up of absolute dependence on the Lord indicated in the word ‘*namo*’ of the eight-lettered *mantra*. It requires no effort on the part of the seeker, and it calls for nothing but cessation of effort prejudicial to the onset of God’s beneficial action. The Lord’s fullness of perfection defies all attempts on the part of the individual to please Him by singing His praises. But, on account of this very perfection, He becomes easily accessible to the individual, and as the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata* and Nammāzhvār point out, any offering of the seeker inspired by sincere devotion that seeks no result extraneous to itself—be it leaf, flower, fruit, water, incense or humble service—moves God to an ecstatic response, in appreciation of the dedication of the devotees. Just as grass which the cow eats is the means of attracting it and of feeding as well as retaining it, the individual’s means of approach to the Lord is the attraction of His form and attributes ; these again constitute the individual’s object of attainment. To put it in another manner, the devotee uses the means of prayer and prostration to reach the Lord, and his enjoyment of the Lord’s presence is also of the same form of prayer and prostration. Thus, there is no difference between the end and the way.

Hence the seeker himself will have an experience of joy before him.

*Prapatti* will not be a way (*upāya*) when the individual thinks of reaching God by the strength of his efforts. Only when the Lord Himself thinks of taking him into His fold even as a Master takes possession of his belongings, can the individual reach Him. When He wills it, even the individual's sins can put no obstacle in his way. We may see illustrations of these in Bharata and Guha. The former's *prapatti* at the feet of Rāma asking Him to return to Ayodhyā went against him, for the Lord did not view it with favour. The very imperfections of the latter, a boatman whom Rāma chose as His friend and liege, became aids to his realization of the Lord. *Prapatti* has to be classed as an offence not only if it goes against the Lord's wish, but also when the devotee recalls his past misdeeds which render his surrender itself an impudence. This happened with Śrī Rāmānuja himself when, in the course of his 'Surrender-prayer' to the Lord, he remembers his past behaviour and feels his present prayer to be an offence causing him shame (out of contrition) and fear (of punishment by God), for which he again takes to soliciting God's pardon in moving terms. The offence involved here has been compared to that of a wife drawn away to attractions other than her husband for a long time, coming back to him without shame or fear and asking him to accept her.

The Lord's acceptance of a *prapanna* may be out of His irrepressible mercy, or out of His free choice of a person whom he takes into His permanent protection. The latter type is a superior acceptance, approved by the *Veda*.<sup>11</sup> He is obtainable only by those whom He chooses. Examples of this voluntary choicc by God are the acceptance of Hanumān on the river Pampā and Guha on the river Gaṅgā by Rāma. When God

accepts a seeker, there are mediators whom both approve. In respect of Hanumān, the mediator was Lakṣmaṇa; in respect of Guha it was through Sītā that Rāma accepted him. The supreme mediator between man and God is Śrī or Lakṣmī, ever present with Him, who intercedes on behalf of erring man and tempers His sovereign justice with mercy. She becomes the Great Witness to the unbreakable bond of protector and protected subsisting between the individual and God. The two parties cannot transgress this relationship attested to by the Great Witness. The deficiencies likely to ensue for God and man—mechanical enforcement of the law of *karma*, leaving each one to suffer or enjoy according to his deeds, on the one hand and getting entangled unavoidably in the good and evil of one's making without hope of release on the other—are set at naught by the merciful intervention of Lakṣmī: both retain their essential nature—God, of being bound by love to those who take refuge in Him, and man, of being bound by love to God and His men. Those who take refuge in God—of the three kinds mentioned earlier—require such mediation to make their approach to God fruitful.

When God, in the abundance of His love, stoops low to enjoy exchanges with the *prapanna*, the latter should not make a fetish of his lowliness and isolate himself. A sweetheart's apparel or jewellery, usually pleasing to her lord, may become an obstacle to the intimacy of their love experiences; Rāma declares that his lady-love did not put on even her necklace for fear of its inhibiting her Lord's touch.<sup>12</sup> When it pleases Him to keep an individual dear to him on earth and enjoy his human existence, the normal good of cessation of earthly life for a man is superseded by a better value. The Great One delights to dwell in the hearts of realized men and revels in enjoying their bodies as well with all their blemishes, even as to those in love the dirt-laden state of their loved ones

is dearer than their dazzling state with bejewelled attire. Lord Rāma who was eager to see His Sītā after her travails in the Aśokavana in the unpresentable state in which she had borne her misery, was angry when she appeared before Him after bathing and wearing fresh dresses. As men who wish to enjoy the scent of certain root plants take them along with some of the soil attached to the roots so that the scent may not get diminished, so also God loves to enjoy the *prapanna* in flesh and blood with all the perfume of his wisdom. If his body, burning with the passion of reaching the Lord instantaneously, is left to remain on earth, the only reason for it can be the Lord's desire to this effect. Nammāzhwār sings of God as a Deceitful Stealer and Poet coming all unknown and swallowing him up wholly, heart and soul.<sup>13</sup> In fact, God displays the same love for the body of one who is *jñānin* and *prapanna* as for all the shrines sacred to Him. Verily, His presence in holy shrines is the means of attraction and His entering the body of such a *prapanna* the end. God is entreated by the Āzhvārs in their ecstatic poems not to forsake His usual abodes in the Milky Ocean or Vaikunṭha or holy shrines, having gained residence in their hearts.<sup>14</sup>

The *Srīvacanabhūṣaṇa* in its fourth and final chapter provides for *prapatti* to the preceptor. When the suppliant takes absolute refuge in God as both means and end, he is likely to be troubled by hope (of redemption by God) alternating with fear (of retribution for his past sins). Better than this troubled state of surrender to God is the surrender to an *Ācārya* as the means (to lead the individual to God) and as the end (the bringer of God-experience); here the soul can rest assured of realizing the *Ācārya* and through him, God. To those who fear the possibility of retribution and find themselves unequal to the call of absolute faith and surrender implied in *prapatti* to God, the choice is resort to the unconditional love of the preceptor

whose boundless grace uplifts without fail the individual who comes unto him.

Reviewing the *cūrṇikās* of Pillai Lokācārya's classic as set out above, it is clear that *prapatti* is a state of constant sensitivity to the Lord's will in all that one does, a way of 'wise passiveness' that puts one in tune with His grace which flows for ever, waiting only for the individual not to obstruct its action. The Lord, being both the means of approach and the end desired, brings it to fruition. He delights in acquiring a *prapanna*, like a master taking possession of his own wealth. He indulges in exchanges with the individual soul, enjoying even its imperfections.

Just as the observance of *bhakti* calls for a daily routine according to śāstraic injunctions, the daily life of a *prapanna* requires a routine, promoting the vision and enjoyment of the Lord to which it is oriented. The nature of this routine called '*prapanna-dinacaryā*' is indicated in the following injunctions stated in Section 243 :

1. He looks upon himself (his body) as an enemy, who is the breeding-ground of the sense of separateness from God (*ahamkāra*) which is the source of destruction to the self as well as attraction to the five senses.

2. He behaves before worldly men who help to further those evil tendencies as he would, when confronted by serpents.

3. He behaves before Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas who help to chase away the evil tendencies as before kinsmen dear to him.

4. Before God (worshipped in temples), he feels that he is with his Father.

5. Before his preceptor, his eagerness to gather spiritual guidance is like that of a hungry person who has just seen food.

6. Before a disciple he feels as though he has seen an object dear to him.

7. He fears that the sense of "I" leads to neglect of the uplifting company of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, that the desire for wealth leads to the cultivation of the spiritually destructive contact of worldly men, and that the craving for sensual pleasure leads to the degrading company of indifferent women. He therefore avoids these.

8. Realising that the qualities that uplift the soul are not due to his efforts or those of others, but to the grace of God coming by the grace of the preceptor, he cultivates indifference in matters of the body and zeal in matters of the soul and relinquishes the sense of enjoyment in material objects like food and clothing.

9. He has a special belief that the sustenance of his body is a by-product of his eating the offerings to God marking the completion of his daily ritual worship (*ārādhana*) of God.

10. He treats any suffering he has to endure as either the result of *karma* or grace of God and feels grateful to Him.

11. He never imagines that his acts can be the means to attain Him (for He can be attained only by His grace).

12. He displays great enthusiasm for the precept and example of realized souls.

13. He has zeal beyond measure for holy shrines.

14. He ever offers prayers of benediction (*maṅgalāśāsaṇa*) to the Lord, praying with great solicitude for Him as well.

15. He discards all other thoughts except those of the Lord.

16. He is full of a consuming passion to reach Him.

17. He limits his respectful attention and services of humility to God's devotees and never offers them to worldly men.

18. He cultivates always the beneficial company of great ones who take him to God.

19. He avoids the company of those who cause offence to the soul's essential nature.

20. As all this observance above is the result of the grace of a preceptor, he conducts himself so as to win the latter's favour.

To the injunctions of the daily routine we may perhaps add the ritual of the worship of the household Deity which is a duty for Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas. The instructions about this worship are found in Śrī Rāmānuja's *Nitya*, Śrī Maṇavāla-mā-muni's *Tiruvārāḍhanakrama* and various similar treatises in both Northern and Southern sects.

This completes the consideration of the *prapannakula* and *prapatti*—according to two celebrated treatises of the Southern tradition. These are written, in pithy Tamil prose sections called *cūrṇikais* in *sūtra* style of Sanskrit treatises. What the *Brahma-sūtras* of Vyāsa have done for the Sanskrit *Vedānta*, the *Ācārya Hṛdaya* (with its 234 sections) and the *Śrī Vacana Bhūṣaṇa* (463 sections) have achieved for the Tamil *Vedānta* based on the songs of the Āzhvārs. Apart from conciseness of expression and mnemonic value, the balanced clauses, crisp statements and summations in these treatises are packed with apt and memorable similes going straight to the heart of believer and unbeliever alike. The commentaries further provide a feast of scholarship and interpretative acumen.

The *prapanna* way of life as an inheritance of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava religion faces today the same threat from modernizing anti-spiritual forces as other institutions of the faith. As practised



by ascetics called 'mukkol-pakayar' (*tridaṇḍi-sannyāsins*) it has been for centuries a living force institutionalizing the *sādhana* of lifelong mystic communion with God, with attendant service to Him in temples.<sup>15</sup> The danger now is the erosion of values and ethos which have been prompting at least a few individuals to the renunciation and service implied in *prapatti*. Even in the heyday of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, in the period upto the 14th century, the practice of *prapatti* must have been limited to developed souls, though its message and purport must have been sources of inspiration to the whole community. Respect and understanding of lay Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas for the institutions connected with the *prapatti-mārga* have to be maintained, if the latter are to survive.

Even those who give up traditional practices and observances may carry the *prapanna* spirit of 'putting oneself in tune with the Infinite' as an inalienable part of this ages-old cultural endowment. For instance, it is said that even in Japan top executives and leaders in different fields have preserved their old attitudes to life, for all their outwardly Western ways of living. They seem still to retain at critical moments the stoic calm and grim resolution which centuries of Buddhist culture have taught them.

A student of comparative religion and philosophy may find the *prapatti* attitude in quarters other than our own. The sense of the insignificance of man in a larger context has always marked the religious spirit. Arnold Toynbee in his book, *Experiences*, written on nearing his eightieth birth-day, quotes approvingly from the Latin poem *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) by the Roman poet, Lucretius. lines of verse to the following effect: "There is a truth which I can affirm with confidence. ... It is out of question that the universe can have been created for our benefit by divine providence. The

faultiness of the nature of the universe is gross, flagrant and intrinsic ”.

The historian then goes on to tell us his own experience thus : “ Religion is a search for the ultimate spiritual principle in the universe, and the purpose of the search is not just the intellectual one of learning the ultimate truth. Beyond that, it is the spiritual purpose of learning the truth in order to try to put oneself into harmony with it. The overcoming of self-centredness is the most difficult spiritual task that any living creature can set for itself. Conscience imposes the job, but does not provide the tools ”. (p. 10 ff.)

Needless to say, the *prapatti* way of life is precisely intended to show how self-centredness may be overcome under the shelter of institutions like those of the *Ācārya* and *Bhāgavataśaṅgha* developed by Vaiṣṇavism. The basic inspiration comes from the mystic experiences of Nammāzhvār, and the *prapatti-mārga* shows us the way of practical mysticism according to the dedicated lives of generations of men of God.

*Prapatti* as putting oneself in absolute harmony with the Divine Will has a parallel in T. S. Eliot’s well-known play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, celebrating the martyrdom of Archbishop Beckett in the reign of Henry II. An invisible Tempter puts before the Archbishop the alluring reward of heavenly grandeur and eternal glory for sacrificing himself in the battle between the church and the State. But he rejects this “ as doing the right deed for the wrong reason.” Secure in the conviction that a man of God is just an instrument in His hands to serve His purposes, Beckett declares in his sermon on Christmas day : “ A martyrdom is always the design of God for His love of men to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man ; for

the true martyr is he who has become an instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being martyr." <sup>16</sup>

All seekers of the Great Truth lying at the centre of the universe have to attain it by obliterating their self ; all religious experience, isolated from the trappings of associated ritual and dogma, points to the primacy of the *prapatti* attitude for realizing the Ultimate.

### REFERENCES

1. Unfortunately his work, *Yoga-rahasya* which must have made clear his usage of the term, *bhakti-yoga*, is now lost to us. Indeed, none of his works are extant, and only a few sentences survive in quotations in later writers.
2. The original runs thus :—  
 pitā tvaṁ, dayitā-tanayastvaṁ, priyasuhṛt  
 tvam eva, tvaṁ mitraṁ, gururasi, gatiścāsi jagatāṁ  
 tvadīyas tvad-bhṛtyas tava parijanas tvad-gatirahaṁ  
 prapannaścaivam, satyaṁ ahamapi tavāsmi hi bharaḥ ||
3. The *śloka* is :  
 Yāmunārya-sudhāmbodhiṁ avagāhya yathāmati  
 Ādāya bhaktiyogākhyam ratnam sandarśayāmyaham
4. The text reads as follows :—  
 Sa khalvantaryāmitayopāsanasyāpi nirvartakaḥ...vaśīkār-  
 yopāsanānirvṛttypāyakāṣṭhābhūtaḥ paramaprāpyaśca sa  
 eva/...tasya ca vaśīkaraṇam taccharaṇāgatireva/

“ He, being the inner controller, is the accomplisher of the (fruit of the) *upāsana* as well ... only He is the supreme object and means for perfecting the *upāsana* for

attracting (Him). To attract Him (to you) is only taking refuge in Him.” (Words in brackets added by present writer.)

5. *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāni*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (April '79) p. 6, 15-16 ; Prof. Raghavachar also aptly mentions Rāmānuja's final surrender to Varada which is what is named as '*prapatti*' in the *Gītā* :

“*Nirastetarabhogaḥ varadaṁ śaraṇam gataḥ*”

(I take refuge in Varada, vanquishing all other sense of enjoyment). A discussion about what the concept of '*prapatti*' owes to the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* and to the experiences of the Āzhvārs as expressed in their Tamil songs is outside the scope of this paper.

6. Viṣṇu-dāsā vyaṁ, yūyaṁ brāhmaṇā varṇadharmiṇaḥ  
asmākaṁ dāsavrittinaṁ yuṣmākaṁ nāsti saṅgatiḥ.
7. The *śloka* usually cited in this connection is :  
ekānti vyapadeṣṭavyo naiva grāmakulādhībhiḥ |  
Viṣṇunā vyapadeṣṭavyaḥ tasya sarvaṁ sa eva hi ||
8. The reference is to *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* :  
‘Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate’
9. The *śloka* quoted in support is the same as at footnote 7.
10. Lakṣmaṇa's words are : “aham asya-avaro bhrātā,  
guṇairdāsyam upāgataḥ ”
11. The reference is to *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3. 2. 3. and  
*Kaṭhcopaniṣad* 2. 23.  
Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na  
bahuṇā śrutena | yamevaiṣa vṛṇute, tena labhyaḥ  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām
12. The *Rāmāyaṇa* passage is said to be :  
hāro'pi nārpiṭaḥ kaṇṭhe sparśa-saṁrodhabhīruṇā  
This is not found in the extant versions of the epic.

13. *Tiruvāymozhi*, 10. 7. 1 ff.
14. *Periya Tiruvantāti* 68, *Iraṇḍām Tiruvantāti*, 54.
15. Toṇḍar-aḍippoḍi Āzhvār refers in his *Tirumālai* (Stanza 38) to Raṅganātha relishing the 'laziness' of ascetics with shaven heads renouncing the things of the world and knowing very much the fundamental truth; evidently these are *prapannas* living in His presence.
16. See Interlude in *Murder in the Cathedral*, p. 57, edition by N. Coghill, O.U.P. Madras, 1963.

*Note :* The Texts and Commentaries of the *Śrī Vacana Bhūṣaṇa* and *Ācārya Hṛdaya* used for this essay are those of Mahāmahimopādhyāya U. Ve. P. B. Aṇṇaṅgarācārya Swāmi (1971). The Vaiṣṇava world is heavily indebted to him, for his expositions and publications.

---

# ‘Āgamas’ and Śrī Rāmaṇuja’s Philosophy

DR. V. VARADACHARI, *Pondicherry.*

The name ‘Āgama’ is given to that branch of study which serves as a means to realise God and His nature and to worship Him. It is representative of the Vedic principles of practical religion and thus is pro-Vedic, though in its evolution, it reveals certain features which could not be traced to the *Vedas*.

The *Vedānta* system of thought is based primarily, as its name indicates, on the Upaniṣadic doctrines and does not derive any influence from the *Āgamas*. This being the original character of the *Vedānta*, it is often held that the *Āgama* mode of worship is anti-Vedic. A deep study of the *Vedānta* in its developed form makes evident the *Āgamic* impact on it.

This applies to Śrī Rāmaṇuja’s philosophy as well. It will be proper to note down the central doctrines of his philosophy before attempting to find out what influence the *Āgamas* could have exerted on it. The main doctrines are :

1. *Brahman* is *saguṇa*.
2. He is a storehouse of countless auspicious qualities and is at the same time absolutely free from defects.
3. He is Śrīmannārāyaṇa.
4. The animate and inanimate worlds and *Brahman* stand in the relation of body and soul—*śārīra-śārīri-bhāva* and *śeṣa-śeṣi-bhāva*.

5. *Bhakti* and *prapatti* are the means of attaining God's grace.
6. *Paripūrṇa-brahmānubhava* marks the state of *mokṣa*.

The *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtras* contain all the materials that may safely be said to have resulted in the formulation of these doctrines at the hands of Rāmānuja. It must however be admitted that the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtras* do not seem explicitly to outline these doctrines. For they have been interpreted otherwise also. To some extent, the *Gītā* should have influenced the development of these doctrines.

The *Upaniṣads* have many doctrines that present apparently mutual contradictions between them. The result has been the formulation of concepts of philosophical systems other than Rāmānuja's which have tried to treat a section of the Upaniṣadic doctrines as primarily valid, relegating the remaining portion as having secondary validity. The master-mind of Śrī Rāmānuja evolved certain lines of interpretation which did offer an exposition upholding the validity of every section without detriment to the real sense of others.

These sources simply touch on or just hint at these doctrines. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*<sup>1</sup> (1. 2. 1. 1) and the *Brahmasūtras* (3. 2. 11–25), together with Śrī Rāmānuja's citations from other *Upaniṣads* and *Purāṇas*, lead to the formulation of the first two doctrines. The third does not have real Upaniṣadic support, from the standpoint of modern research scholars, except from the *Mahānārāyaṇīya* which is held to be later in point of time. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* supports the fourth doctrine. *Bhakti* and *prapatti* have the *Gītā* as the solid basis. The Upaniṣadic passages, cited by Śrī Rāmānuja, while interpreting the last quarter of the *Brahmasūtras* (IV), help in regarding them as the source for the last doctrine.

Caution is required in drawing conclusions which may find favour only with devout Vaiṣṇavas who may not care much for chronological sources.

Some scholars have charged Śrī Rāmanuja with having no attraction for the devotional element. The fact is otherwise. He had to meet the monistic theories of Śaṅkara on his own ground and so, confined himself to almost the same sources as the *Advaita* teacher. This was a Herculean task in which others could have fumbled. Naturally, he could not explicitly refer to the *Āgama* texts and still more to the composition of the *Āzhvārs*. This does not imply that they have had no influence on his philosophical works.

The *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* are of two kinds, namely, *Vaikhānasa* and *Pāñcarātra*. The former, which is confined only to those Vaiṣṇavas following the *Vaikhānasa Sūtra*, did not have any appeal to others. The *Pāñcarātra* system did influence the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*<sup>2</sup> which in its turn exerted a profound influence on Śrī Rāmanuja.

The creation theories of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* did not have any appeal to him, as one who followed Upaniṣadic and Paurāṇic accounts. That *Brahman* is *saguṇa* and is an abode of innumerable auspicious qualities, without the least tinge of any blemish, is explicitly stated in the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*,<sup>3</sup> one of the earliest texts of this *Āgama*. *Brahman* is named as Nārāyaṇa in the *Lakṣmītantra*<sup>4</sup> and *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*.<sup>5</sup> The *śūḍguṇya* aspect as expounded in the latter is suggestive of the relation of body and soul.<sup>6</sup> Though the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* tries to trace the concept of *prapatti* to the *Vedas*,<sup>7</sup> yet it is this *Saṁhitā*<sup>8</sup> and *Lakṣmītantra*<sup>9</sup> that have influenced Vaiṣṇavism in adopting the doctrine of *prapatti*.

The *Upaniṣads* do not contain any detailed treatment of the qualities of *Brahman*. Śrī Rāmanuja refers to *Brahman* as free



from stain and as a store-house of limitless auspicious qualities. His body is to be the resting place of the host of the best qualities. Blameworthy things have no place in Him. How did Śrī Rāmānuja get this concept? The answer will be found in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (6 . 5 . 54-55). Wherefrom did its author, Parāśara, get this? It may be said that he got direct knowledge of these through meditation. This cannot be ruled out. Yet, it will not be unsafe to admit that the *Āgamas* had evolved these concepts and that the *Purāṇas* owed much to this Āgamic treatment. The references to the four *vyūha* names of the Lord and to the application of the name, 'Bhagavān', only to Viṣṇu indicate Parāśara's indebtedness to the *Pāñcarātra* tradition of Viṣṇu's *saguṇa* aspect.

The *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā*<sup>10</sup> offers a very clear account of *Para Brahman's* nature. The Upaniṣadic reference to *Brahman* as attributeless is interpreted in this *Samhitā* as the absence in Him of the qualities of matter, that is, as the possession of non-material traits.<sup>11</sup> *Brahman* is stated to be Nārāyaṇa.<sup>12</sup> His possession of the six qualities, *jñāna*, *bala*, *vīrya*, *aīśvarya*, *śakti* and *tejas* account for his name 'Bhagavān'.<sup>13</sup> Mention of the Lord with this name in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, without any previous introduction or explanation, is sure and sound evidence that by the time these works were composed, Viṣṇu was widely known by the name of Bhagavān and nobody had any difficulty in understanding this. The *Vedas* do not speak of this name. It is the *Pāñcarātra Samhitās* that have been treating this name and other aspects of Viṣṇu's qualities. Parāśara and Vyāsa should have been quite aware of these.

The *Lakṣmītantra*, another early text, mentions in the *maṅgalaśloka*<sup>13</sup> that the Supreme Being is Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. Both this text and the *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā*<sup>14</sup> do not lose any

occasion to mention that *Brahman* is Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Bhagavān and Vāsudeva.

The *Ubhayaśiṅgādhikaraṇa*<sup>15</sup> of the *Brahmasūtras* afforded to Śrī Rāmānuja Upaniṣadic support for maintaining the *saguṇa* concept of *Brahman* combined with His flawlessness.

The influence of the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* did not, however, seem to have directly affected Śrī Rāmānuja. The *Āgamas* exerted a profound influence on the Āzhvārs' compositions which in turn inspired Nāthamuni and his grandson, Yāmuna or Āḷavandār. The *Stotraratna* of the latter can be looked upon as the Sanskrit version in an epitomized form of the Āzhvārs' treatment of God's qualities and achievements. Śrī Rāmānuja did attach great importance to this composition of his *prācārya*. The result was his writing the *Gadyatraya* and the introductory portion of the *Bhāṣya* on the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Many qualities, which are based on the *śāḍguṇya* concept of the *Āgamas*, are found enumerated in the two works mentioned above, piling one epithet over another in expressions of enchanting elegance. The *Jitante Stotra*, which contains a glorious description in the classical manner of the person of God and His qualities, should have also influenced him.

It could be suggested that sculpture and architecture might have impressed Śrī Rāmānuja or even Āḷavandār to have accepted the concept of *Saguṇa Brahman*. This, cannot, however, be proved, for the icon and its worship are found treated in the *Āgamas*, for which the two arts and their workmanship could or should have provided much support.

Now a question arises regarding the position of Śrī or Lakṣmī in Śrī Rāmānuja's system. The *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* do not seem to offer any indication for the place of Lakṣmī.

The *Śrisūkta* is considered to be *Ṛgveda-khila*, a supplement, and so it does not rank with the *Puruṣa-sūkta* for determining the nature of *Brahman*.

The Sāṃkhya theory of creation, the active part given to energy in any dynamic work, the feminine gender of the words to denote it and the need to have it closely associated with and controlled by a sentient being gave rise to the concept of *Śakti* in the *Āgamas*. *Śakti* is not inanimate material force, but the active principle associated with *Brahman*. It came to be looked upon as *Śrī* or *Lakṣmī* ever associated with *Viṣṇu* in the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas*. This doctrine became prevalent in the *Purāṇas* and was treated in the compositions of the *Āzhvārs*. So *Brahman* is, according to *Śrī Rāmānuja*, *Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa* or *Śrīnivāsa* on *Śrīyaḥpati*. *Ālavandār's Catuṣślokī* and *Rāmānuja's Śrīprapatti* section in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* bear evidence to this.

Another aspect of *Brahman* is that it has no limitations (is *ananta*). This means that *Brahman* is infinite in every respect. It is not limited in time or space and cannot be determined to be of any particular size in term of objective units of measurement. Here the *Purāṇas* offer an explicit treatment<sup>16</sup> and *Śrī Rāmānuja* should have adopted this. At the same time, one finds a convenient and vivid account in the *AhīrbudhnyaSamhitā*.<sup>17</sup> Since the validity of the *Pāñcarātra* was questioned during this period, he did not choose to take its authority and so confined himself to *Purāṇic* accounts.

In the matter of cosmology, he stuck to the authority of the *Upaniṣads* which speak of *Brahman* as both the material and instrumental causes for the universe. It is *Brahman* that is spoken of as *tajjalān*,<sup>18</sup> that is, as that from which the universe springs out, into which it merges at dissolution and by which it is sustained. Here again, the *Pāñcarātra Āgama*<sup>19</sup> texts

maintain *Brahman* together with Śakti as the material and instrumental cause. This account is more convincing and more easily understandable. This is not to suggest that the Upaniṣadic view is not satisfactory. The Āgamic account is only based on the Upaniṣadic import. Śrī Rāmānuja could not adopt it, until the validity of the *Āgama* was admitted.

The relation between the world of animate and inanimate beings and *Brahman* is featured in his system as that of body and soul. He finds the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*<sup>20</sup> supporting this relation. Though it is not impossible to explain this relation from the standpoint of the *Āgamas*, yet it is a fact that *Āgamas* do not offer any indication for admitting this doctrine. Likewise, his definition of body and his concept of *śeṣa* are also not traceable to the *Āgamas*.

The *Āgama* concept of God as *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Arcā* and *Antaryāmin* influenced the Puraṇic versions of God in a way, but not fully. Of these aspects, the *Para* lies beyond the reach of people in the material world, and the *Antaryāmin*, too, though present within every living being, lies beyond the reach of ordinary human comprehension. The *Vyūha* concept seeks to explain the evolution of the world out of *Brahman*. One important aspect is that creation is to be classified as pure, impure and mixed.<sup>21</sup> Pure creation is needed for the purpose of maintaining the nature of the physical bodies of the four *vyūha* deities as unsullied by matter. Otherwise, these deities should be no better than enlightened mortals. This concept became applicable to the *Vibhava* forms of the deities also. The *Mahābhārata* mentions Kṛṣṇa's body as not made up of flesh, marrow, blood and other things which are material.<sup>22</sup> This has to be explained as belonging to pure creation. Hence the word, '*vibhava*', should be rendered by the English equivalent, 'divine descent', in preference to the Christian word, 'incarnation'.

The cumulative aspect of these Āgamic and Purāṇic developments is revealed at first in the works of the Āzhvārs and later in the *Stotratratna* of Yāmuna. Such writings have left a deep impression on Rāmānuja's *Gadyatraya*. The Āzhvārs depicted in their compositions all the five forms of God in an inter-related manner. To them, the idol of God enshrined in the temples is not a piece of metal, wood or stone. It is to be considered to be non-material in kind. Otherwise, the presence of God there cannot be believed with piety and religious fervour. Rāmānuja did believe in treating the *arcā* form of God as identical with the Ultimate Reality because the idol, through the Āgama-enjoined process of consecration and installation, is held to have become non-material in its composition.

The form of Śrī Raṅganātha, on the one hand, possesses the marks and characteristics of the Ultimate Reality as treated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and has, on the other, innumerable qualities. Here is found the impact of the Āgamas through the *Jitante Stotra* and *Purāṇas*.

The *Pāñcarātra*<sup>23</sup> and *Vaikhānasa Āgamas*<sup>24</sup> recommend an integrated course for seeking freedom from bondage. *Karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* are the means according to both, and *prapatti* is added as the fourth means enjoined by the *Pāñcarātra Āgama*.<sup>25</sup> *Karma* and *jñāna* relate to the obligatory duties and knowledge of the Ultimate Reality respectively. The Āgama concepts of these do not materially differ from Vedic and *Gītā* teachings. Since the *arcā* form of God is recommended for worship in both the Āgamas, it is evident that devotion forms the basis for offering worship to God. By *bhakti*, the eight-limbed yogic practice is recommended in both the Āgamas. Rāmānuja has adopted all these in full, but it is not clear whether he drew inspiration from the Āgamas in this respect or from other sources, Vedic and Purāṇic.

Regarding *prapatti*, it is found that the *Lakṣmitantra* and *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*<sup>26</sup> offer a clear exposition. They represent it as the most useful and never-failing means which any living being can adopt. The *Upaniṣads* and *Gītā* speak of it. The Āzhvārs have adopted it. Yet it is the Āgamic source that seems to have influenced Rāmānuja in adopting it.

*Mokṣa*, according to the two *saṁhitās* referred to above, is the full experience of *Para Brahman* in the non-material world.<sup>27</sup> Rāmānuja adopts this and in addition speaks of the *śeṣa* aspect of the self which entails rendering of service to God.<sup>28</sup>

A reference could be made here to Rāmānuja's attitude towards the *Utpattayasambhavādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtras* (2. 2. 39-42). Śaṅkara and Bhāskara took this section as dealing with the refutation of *Pāñcarātra's* validity. Yāmuna felt the need to controvert this. He took the first half of this section as the *prima-facie* view and the latter half as maintaining *Pāñcarātra's* validity. Rāmānuja followed him and gave an exposition of this attitude.

An objection to the stand taken by Yāmuna and Rāmānuja can be stated thus. The second quarter of the second chapter of the *Brahmasūtras* is devoted to a refutation of the various schools of thought which are opposed to the *Vedānta*. The *Pāñcarātra* system must also have been meant to be refuted, as it is included in this quarter. Besides, it is improper to split a section (*adhikaraṇa*) into two parts, one of them governing the *prima-facie* view and the other the *siddhānta*.

To this, the rejoinder is based on the attitude of Vyāsa towards the *Pāñcarātra*. He speaks very highly of this *Āgama* which is traced in its origin and tenets to Nārāyaṇa in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* (*Sāntiparvan*).<sup>29</sup> He

is also the author of the *Brahmasūtras*. Is it not absurd to take him as having spoken of this system as authentic in one work and refuted its validity in another? Secondly, there are sections in the *Brahmasūtras*<sup>30</sup> which treat both the *prima-facie* view and *siddhānta*. There is nothing incongruous in this, and as if to indicate acceptance after many refutations this section on the *Pāñcarātra* gets treated at the very end. Thirdly and lastly, there is no harm in taking all the seven sections in Ch. II, second quarter as aimed at the refutation of all other systems of thought. The last section notes the objection raised against the *Pāñcarātra* and rejects it in order to show that, among all other schools of thought, it is this system alone that is admissible.

It will not be out of place here to refer to Madhva's treatment of this section of the *Brahmasūtrās*. According to him, this section refutes Śakti as the sole cause for the world. Vyāsa here argues that the world could not have been produced from Śakti and Śakti only. This appears more relevant in the context.

Rāmānuja, however, did not take this line of reasoning, because the opposition to the validity of the *Pāñcarātra* was well argued and became formidable through the refutation of the system by Śaṅkara and Bhāskara. This opposition is to be tackled on the same plane, namely, that the doctrines of the system are valid or invalid. The position of Śakti coming into the picture is irrelevant in this context. Hence probably Rāmānuja had to employ his arguments to reject the contention of Śaṅkara and Bhāskara and establish his position on solid ground.

Since philosophy and religion are inextricably welded together in the *Vedānta* system, it may be proper to refer to the influence of the *Āgamas* on the religious aspects also. The

*Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* deal mostly with the construction of temples and icons to be housed there and with the methods of worship. Rāmānuja did not take the opportunity to treat this aspect of the *Āgamas* in any of his works. On the other hand, the practice of *prapatti* and daily worship of the Lord in one's house are treated by him in the *Gadyatraya* and *Nitya* respectively. Self-surrender as described in the *Gadyatraya*, was practised by him before Śrī Rāṅganātha.

The *Nitya* lays down the rules for the observance of daily duties, particularly worshipping God. The main aspects treated that have relevance here are :

(1) Objects of enjoyment which are to be offered to God are described as of three kinds, *aupacārika*, *sāṃsparsika* and *abhyavahārika*.

(2) *Bhūtaśuddhi*.

(3) Worship, which is called *Yāga*, is performed in two stages called *Antaryāga* and *Bahiryāga*.

(4) Six *āsanas* (seats or positions) are to be offered at different stages to the Deity. They are *mantrāsana*, *snānāsana*, *alaṅkārasana*, *bhojyāsana*, *mantrāsana* again and *paryāṅkāśana*.

(5) Prostration to God is to be eight-limbed.

(6) Use of *Āgama mantras* like *astra* and *mudrās* like *surabhi*.

All these owe their origin only to the *Pāñcarātra Āgama*. The first topic is treated in the *Lakṣmītantra* Ch. 36 and *Ahīrbudhnya-saṃhitā* Ch. 28 ; the second in Chs. 25 and 28 respectively in these two texts ; and *Yāga*, the third topic, in Chapters 36 and 37 of *Lakṣmītantra*. The six *āsanas* are dealt with in Chapter 39 of the *Lakṣmītantra* and Chapter 28 of the



*Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*. *Aṣṭāṅgapraṇāma* is dealt with in chapter 28 of the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*.

The *astra mantra* is contained in chapter 37 of the *Lakṣmitantra* and *mudrās* in chapter 21 of the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*.

The *Nitya* must remove all doubts and misgivings as to whether Rāmānuja was influenced by *Pāñcarātra* or not. Thus it is clear that he adopted the *Āgama* precepts for the religious aspect of his system and was not opposed to them in the sphere of philosophy, though there are indications to suggest that they did influence him. As he was primarily concerned with the establishment of his system of thought against the monistic theory of Saṅkara, he did not care to present the *Pāñcarātra* doctrines on the philosophical side.

## REFERENCES

1. 'Satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma',  
—*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (1. 2. 1. 1).
2. *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, (5. 18. 58).
3. 'Ekaṁ nirduḥkha-nissīma-sukhānubhava-lakṣaṇam'  
—*Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (2. 22a).
4. 'Nārāyaṇaḥ paraṁ brahma' —*Lakṣmītantra* (17. 7b).
5. 'Anādyanantaṁ paraṁ brahma Nārāyaṇamanāmayam'  
—*Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* 2. 22b.  
'Nārāyaṇaḥ paraṁ brahma' —*Ibid.* (4. 77b).  
'Nārāyaṇaḥ samākhyātam' —*Ibid.* (13. 18a)
6. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (2. 55–62).
7. *Ṛgveda* (8. 19. 5, 6).

8. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (37, 23-49).
9. *Lakṣmītantra* (Ch. 17).
10. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (2, 22-53).
11. *Ibid.* (2, 55a).
12. *Ibid.* (4, 77b).
13. 'Namo nityānavadyāya jagataḥ paramahetave  
Jñānāya nistarāṅgāya Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇātmane'  
—*Lakṣmītantra* (1. 1).
14. Vide : *Ibid.* (2, 5b, 6a).  
*Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (2, 22b ; 4, 77b).  
*Ibid.* (33, 48b) ; *Ibid.* (5, 28a) ; *Ibid.* (59, 6b-7) ;  
*Ibid.* (53, 15b) ; *Ibid.* (53, 10a) ; *Ibid.* (30, 11a).
15. *Brahmasūtras* 3. 2. 5 ; *sūtras* 11 to 25.
16. Vide :  
'Kālam sa pacate tatra na kalas tatra vai prabhuḥ'  
—*Mahābhārata Śānti* (169, 9).
17. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (2, 46-53).
18. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (3. 14. 1).
19. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (3).
20. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3. 7).
21. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* (5, 6, 7).  
*Lakṣmītantra* 4, 5, 32.
22. Vide :  
'Na bhūtasāṅga-saṁsthāno deho 'sya paramatmanah'  
—*Mahābhārata-Śānti* (206, 60).
23. *Lakṣmītantra* 5. 17 ; Ch. 15 & 16.  
*Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*, Ch. 54.

24. *Vimānārcaṇakalpa*, Ch. 94–100.
25. *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*, Ch. 37,  
*Lakṣmītantra*, Ch. 17.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Lakṣmītantra*, 54, 55a.
28. Paragatātisayādhanēcchayā upādeyatvam  
eva yasya svarūpaṁ sa śeṣaḥ' — *Vedārthasaṁgraha*,  
(Anṅgaracharya's edition, P. 34).
29. *Mahābhārata Śānti*, Ch. 337–375.
30. *Brahmasūtras* II. Section 7, Sūtras 21–23,  
              ,,                                     9,       ,,     26–31,  
              ,,                                     II,       ,,     26,       ,,     59–64.

# Sri Ramanuja in Epigraphy

PROFESSOR DR. K. V. RAMAN, *Madras.*

The long and eventful life of Sri Rāmanuja is attested by the traditional accounts contained in the works like the *Divyasūri-carita*, *Gurupāraṁparā* etc. and the eulogies of his contemporaries such as the *Rāmānuja-Nūtrandādi* etc. Are there any independent historical evidences also? It is indeed interesting to probe into the epigraphical and historical evidence which corroborates the traditional and literary accounts. In this paper, some interesting references to Sri Rāmānuja, his works and activities as well as his contemporaries and disciples are culled out from different places like Kāñci, Śrīperumbūdūr, Tirumalai, Tirupati, Melkote and Tonnūr (Tonḍanur) and their importance discussed. Inscriptions not only in Tamil Nadu but outside, in places like Ahobilam, Nellur, Guntur, Mysore etc. would serve to show how the cult and teachings of Rāmānuja spread far and wide and how he was held in great reverence.

One of the important incidents in Ramanuja's stormy career was his visit to the Mysore areas under difficult circumstances. Among the places visited by him are said to be Vahnipuṣkariṇi, a place on the Kāveri about 40 miles west of Mysore, Mirle and Śaligrāma, and about 10 miles eastward of Tonnūr or Tonḍanur where Biṭṭi Deva had his capital then and actually resided. It was at Tonnūr, according to Vaiṣṇava tradition, that he brought Biṭṭi-deva to the Vaiṣṇava fold and

named him Viṣṇuvardhana. It was here according to the tradition, that he defeated the Jains in a controversy. Now it is indeed interesting to find many contemporary inscriptions in the Mysore area confirming his activities there. Let us review them chronologically. (*Mysore Gazetteer* by Hayavadana Rao).

(1) An inscription belonging to the time of Viṣṇuvardhana the Hoysāla king, is found at Lakṣmīnārāyaṇaswāmi temple, Toṇṇūr. It mentions a grant to the *Rāmānuja-maṭha*.

(2) In all the early inscriptions Viṣṇuvardhana is called as Biṭṭi Hoysāla Deva, the same name found in the *Guruparamparā*. In later days, he was known by the name of Viṣṇuvardhana.

(3) An interesting inscription found in the Rāmānuja temple at Sāligrāma confirms his visit to the place. The inscription starts with an invocatory verse in his praise, Then it records that Embār, Āṇḍan and Āccān of the *Rāmānuja-maṭha* of Śrīraṅgam granted some privileges to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of Sāligrāma. They are well-known associates of Rāmānuja.

(4) The traditional account that Rāmānuja built the temple at Melkote with the help of King Viṣṇuvardhana, is supported by an inscription there which may be assigned to his times. It refers to the orders of Viṣṇuvardhana and contains a grant to the *maṭha* of Rāmānuja.

(5) Another epigraph at Toṇṇūr mentions one Tiruvaraṅga Dāsar who called himself as a servant of Ilayāzhvaṇ, a name by which Rāmānuja was known before he became a *sannyāsin*.

(6) The Vaiṣṇava tradition that Toṇṇur was the seat of Biṭṭi-deva, later called Viṣṇuvardhana, is also attested. It is described as the capital of the Hoysāla kingdom in an inscription

dated 1128 A.D. Its alternate name was Yāḍavanārāyaṇa Caturvedimaṅgalam.

(7) Another inscription of Viṣṇuvardhana found on a pillar refers to the *maṅṭapa* built under the orders of the king by his *mahāpradhāna* (Prime Minister) Surigeya Nagayya. (The traditional date of Rāmanuja's visit to Toṇṇūr is 1099 A.D. before Bitti Deva's accession).

(8) Similarly, an inscription in the Navaraṅga of the Nārāyaṇaswāmi temple at Melkote records that Surigeya Nagidevaṇṇa, the builder of the *maṅṭapa* at Toṇṇūr made a grant for God. This confirms to a certain extent the traditional story that Rāmanuja built the Melkote temple with the aid of Viṣṇuvardhana (*M.A.R.*, 1912, Para 84).

Rāmanuja does appear to have visited the Hoysāla kingdom and converted King Bitti Deva. His sojourn in Mysore is reflected in certain inscriptions. The actual reason for his visit, according to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, was Chola persecution. It might have also been due to the presence of Sri-Vaiṣṇavas in those areas.

That Rāmanuja stayed at Toṇḍanūr and Melkote and that he visited Sāligrāma is attested by inscriptions. The inscription found in the Lakṣmīnārāyaṇaswāmi temple at Toṇṇūr has already been cited.

(9) An inscription in characters of the 12th century (i.e., Rāmanuja's period) is found on the door lintel of Śrīpāda-tīrtha pond in Rāmanujācārya temple at Sāligrāma. It confirms in a way his visit to the place. After obeisance to him and a Sanskrit verse in praise, it records in Kannada that Embār, Āṇḍan and Āccān of the *maṭṭa* (i.e., Rāmanujācārya *maṭṭa*) of Śrīraṅgaṁ, granted some privileges to the Sri-Vaiṣṇavas of Sāligrāma. The persons named were among the immediate disciples of

Rāmānuja, the first two being in addition his close relatives. Embār was his cousin and Āṇḍān alias Mudali Āṇḍān was his nephew. Āccān also known as Kiṭāmbi-Āccān was a favourite disciple (*M.A.R.* 1911-12, Para 76). That these disciples at Śrīraṅgam should have conferred certain privileges on the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas at Sāligrāma shows their personal interest in them.

(10) A direct epigraphical mention we have of Rāmānuja's visit to Melkote is contained on the Toṇḍanūr copper plates dated 1722 A.D. It is stated in the inscription that Yādavagiri had been the residence of Yatirāja (*E.C.*, Srirangapatnam 64).

#### *I. Mysore :*

"Thus the indirect evidences derived from inscriptions indicate that Rāmānuja did visit Mysore somewhere about the time of Viṣṇuvardhana, and that he did convert him is proved by the fact that he not only changed his name but also by his active propagation of the newly embraced faith by building temples in honour of it" (Hayavadana Rao). In an inscription dated 1100 A.D- he is called Biṭṭi Hoysāla-deva while in an inscription dated 1117 A.D. he is called Bhujabala Vīra Gaṅgā-pratāpa Viṣṇuvardhana (*M. A. R.* 1911-12, page 83). In 1117 A.D. he set up the image of God Kīrtinārāyaṇa at Talakkāḍ after driving the Cholas out of the place (*Ibid.*). In the same year the image of Vijayanārāyaṇa at Belur was consecrated (*E.C.*, Belur, 58). Hayavadana Rao places the conversion of Biṭṭi-deva at a date between 1100 and 1116 A.D., the year in which the Cholas were expelled from Talakkāḍ and in which the new name occurs for the first time. We may not be far wrong if we set down 1113 A.D. as the actual year. (*My. Gaz.* pp. 1325-29).

(11) Viṣṇuvardhana's son was called Narasimha and his son was named Yādava Nārāyaṇa (1178-1220).

(12) The Chief Minister of Narasimha II was a great general. He had the title 'Vaiṣṇava Cakravartin' (p. 1390). He also served under his father, Ballāla II.

(13) *Rāmānuja Sāsana* : Śravaṇabelagola (A.D. 1368)

This is the famous inscription written during the time of the Vijayanagara king, Bukka I (*E. P. Car.* II, *S. B.* 344). It refers to the settlement of a dispute between Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas (*bhaktas*) and the Jains (the blessed people) by the good offices of Bukkarāya. The king called both the parties and brought about a reconciliation. He took the hands of the Jains and placed them in the hands of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas as a mark of amity. This meeting was attended by the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas of 18 Nāḍus including the *Ācāryas* of Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati, Kāñci and Melkote and other Vaiṣṇava groups such as 'Tirukkulattār' and 'Jāmbavakulas', who helped Rāmānuja in recovering the image of Selvapillai. It is stated therein that the Vaiṣṇava creed would continue to protect the Jaina creed as long as the sun and moon endured. The occurrence of the name 'Tirukkulattār' is significant as it was the name given by Rāmānuja to the outcastes in token of his gratitude for the protection they gave him. They were given the right of entry into the temple at Melkote.

This inscription opens with a verse in praise of Rāmānuja from the *Dhātī-pañcaka*.

## II. *Śrī Rāmānuja's idols* :

According to the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition idols of Rāmānuja were consecrated during his own life time at four important places—Śrīraṅgam, Tirumalai, Śrīperumbūdūr, and Tirunārāyaṇapuram or Melkote. Art historians and connoisseurs who have seen the exquisite bronze idols cannot fail to be impressed with their lifelike charm and dignity. The image of



Śrī Rāmānuja at Śrīperumbūdūr is accepted by all as an icon of outstanding beauty and majesty, and it can stylistically be ascribed to Rāmānuja's times.

### *Tirumalai :*

The tradition is that Tirumalai Anantāzhvār, a close associate of Śrī Rāmānuja, was responsible for the consecration of his image at Tirumalai. This is remarkably confirmed by an inscription at Tirumalai which refers to Anantāzhvār's grandson doing service to the shrine of Uḍaiyavar (224 of *T.T.*).

Another inscription records the pledge of Anantāzhvār Veṅkaṭatturaivār to carry on the 'Uḍaiyavar dharmaṁ' or orders.

The traditional account also gives credit for introducing the recital of *Rāmānuja-Nūtrantādi* in front of Rāmānuja's shrine to Anantāzhvār. This practice was continued in later times also. This is attested by an inscription (394 *A.T.T.*).

### *Kāñcīpuram :*

The third *prākāra* in Śrī Varadarājaswāmi temple in Kāñcī is now known as 'Maḍappalli-prākāra'. It was however called in olden times by the beautiful name 'Yamunaitturaivar-tirumuṭṭam', i.e., 'the courtyard of Yamunaitturaivar or Ālavandār'. The great Śrī Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* is believed to have seen Śrī Rāmānuja for the first time in this courtyard. This is considered to be a historic meeting, as it led to Ālavandār's choice of Rāmānuja as his successor at Śrīraṅgam. The incident is prominently mentioned in Pinbazhahiya Perumāḷ Jīyar's *Guruparaṁparā*. And it is very well confirmed by the inscription at Kāñcī

*Deification of Rāmānuja :* Rāmānuja's association with the temple of Śrī Varadarāja in the formative years of his life and his great devotion to the Lord (Peraruḷāla) is mentioned in the

*Guruparamparā* and the *Rāmānuja Nūṭṭandādi*. The works describe him as ‘*Attīyūr-kalanaipūnda-anbāḷan*’ in recognition of his great service. Rāmānuja was deified in Varadarāja temple in A.D. 1191, within 55 years after his demise. (K. V. Raman, *Śrī Varadarājaswāmi Temple, Kāñci*). An influential Cola chieftain by name Ilaiyāzhvān-Kālīṅgarāyan consecrated the image of Emberumānār and donated all the taxes accruing from two villages to meet the expenses for the offerings to the deity. He also made special provisions for the *Bhāṣyavṛtti* (i.e., study of Rāmānuja’s *Bhāṣya*). The name ‘Ilaiyāzhvān’ is significant. It was a popular name of Rāmānuja. This inscription is important in the following ways : that Śrī Rāmānuja was known by that special title ‘Emberumānār’ by which the Śrīvaiṣṇavas called him endearingly ; and that his commentary had gained currency in the Kāñci temple where grants were made for its exposition ; and that a chieftain, Kālīṅgarāyan, the donor, called himself as Ilaiyāzhvān.

An inscription dated A. D. 1359 informs us that there was a *maṭh* at Kāñci presided over by one Vaiṣṇavadāsa alias Brahmatantra Svatantra. The main purpose of the *maṭh* was to propagate the tenets of Rāmānuja-*darśana*. From this record, we gather that there was a good collection of manuscripts with Vaiṣṇavadāsa and other accessories of a library.

*Śrīperumbūdūr* (Chingleput district) :

A copperplate grant from Śrīperumbūdūr belonging to the period of Śrīraṅga, dated S 1499, (A. D. 1577), registers grant of a village as *sarvamānya* to the scholar Tirumalācārya ‘at whose feet many chieftains bowed’ and who was the eldest son of Appayācārya and grandson of Śiṅgarācārya, all of whom are described as great devotees of Veṅkatādiśa of Tirupati. He belonged to the Bharadvāja *gotra* and Āpastamba *sūtra* and

was learned in all the *śāstras* and *darśanas* and was proficient in the teaching of the *Śrī-bhāṣya* to his disciples. He was proficient in the two *Vedas* and had the title 'Vādi-Vāraṇa-Simha' (a lion to the elephants in debate). He was a descendant of Anantaguru or Anantārya who at the direction of the great teacher Rāmānuja, reared a flower-garden for the temple at Veṅkaṭādri, dug a tank and constructed a *maṇṭapa* called Yāmunācāryamaṇṭapa after the preceptor of Rāmānuja's preceptors and also constructed a spacious hall called 'Campaka' of black stone and a *gopura* called 'Campaka-gopura'. He was honoured with a garland worn by God. (*Annual Report of Epigraphy*, 1924-25).

This Anantaguru is called in inscriptions *Rāmānujapādākṛti*, i.e., resembling the feet of Rāmānuja. Mudaliyāṇḍān, Rāmānuja's sister's son, is also generally called 'Rāmānuja-pādukā'.

This grant was made at the request of one Savaram Chenna, the disciple of the donee. The chief is called the governor of Penukoṇḍa (*ARE*. 1924-25).

There is a Telugu inscription on a slab near the *gopura* of Ādikeśava-perumāl temple at Śrīperumbūdūr. It is dated Ś. 1494 (A.D. 1572) during the time of the Vijayanagar king, Śrīraṅga Mahārāya. It records a gift of taxes for some villages by Veṅkaṭayyadeva Mahārāya, brother of the King (Śrīraṅga) for the worship of and offerings to Ādikeśava-perumāl who had been worshipped by Śrī Bhāṣyakāra at Śrīperumbūdūr (185 of 1922). This inscription has recorded the tradition that Śrī Rāmānuja was a devotee of Ādikeśava-perumāl.

Another inscription at Śrīperumbūdūr has recorded a gift of gold for providing offerings when the image of Emberumānār halted at the place where the saint was born, after going round the streets in procession in the month of Āvaṇi. This obviously refers to a festival to honour Śrī Rāmānuja in his *avatārasthala*.

*Andhra :*

*Ahobilam :* An inscription in the Narasimhaswami temple gives a long list of various things required for offerings to Śrī Bhāṣyakāra (Rāmānuja) on the twelve days of his *tirunakṣattiram* every year (83 of 915).

*Ongole :* Ānjaneya temple, Bollapalli, Ongole in Guntur district : An inscription dated S 1467 records that Sadāśiva Mahārāya gave the village Bollapalli in Addaṅki-sīma to Śrīmat Tiruveṅgaṭanātha, son of Śrīmat Talapāka Tirumalayyaṅgār. It begins with a salutation to Śrī Rāmānuja. (*Top. List. of Inscriptions* 337).

*Nāgalapuram :* Vedanarāyaṇaswami temple. A record of Kṛṣṇadevarāya dated S. 1445 (1523 A D.) records a grant for the recitation of Sanskrit and Tamil *Vedas* (*Drāviḍa-veda*) and exposition of *Vedānta*.

There are also many places in Andhra like Simhacalam where there is strong local tradition associating the local temple with Rāmānuja's mission. The foregoing account gives only select inscripational evidences to show how Rāmānuja's teachings and influence reached distant places and how his message and association were cherished at many places in the past. Inscriptions afford ample testimony for the great reverence with which he was held throughout India. Royal persons, chieftains, generals and intellectuals as well as the common folk were his devotees, They paid their homage to him through various pious acts—like land and money grants to celebrate his festival, or for the exposition of his philosophy, through installation of his images and worship etc. Thus, the inscriptions provide interesting additional historical data on the life and teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja.

---

## RĀMĀNUJA ON GOD : A WESTERN VIEW

Rāmānuja's God was a personal being, full of grace and love for his creation. He could even over-ride the power of *karma* to draw repentant sinners to him. Unlike the impersonal World Soul of Śaṅkara, which made the illusory universe in a sort of sport (*līlā*), Rāmānuja's God needed man, as man needed God. By forcing the sense Rāmānuja interpreted the words of Kṛṣṇa, "the wise man I deem my very self" (*Bhagavad Gītā* VII, 18) to imply that just as man cannot live without God, so God cannot live without man. The individual soul, made by God out of his own essence, returned to its maker and lived in full communion with him, but was always distinct. It shared the divine nature of omniscience and bliss, and evil could not touch it, but it was always conscious of itself as an 'I', for it was eternal by virtue of its being a part of god-head, and if it lost self-consciousness, it would cease to exist. It was one with God and yet separate.....

.....Indian religion perhaps owes even more to him (Rāmānuja) than his predecessor (Śaṅkara). In the centuries following his (Rāmānuja's) death, his ideas spread all over India and were the starting point of most of the devotional sects of later times.

—from *The Wonder That Was India*  
by A. L. Basham.

---

# Daily Routine According to Rāmaṇuja

PROF. R. N. SAMPATH, M.A., PH.D., P. & P. A. (Dip.), *Madras.*

Any religious leader is a potential social reformer and Śrī Rāmaṇuja is an explicit example. Unlike the other members of his tribe, he strove not only to establish the system of philosophy called Viśiṣṭādvaita and propagate it through all the available means and media, but also desired that such a philosophical outlook must percolate into the daily life of the people, so that the life of every individual itself might become 'divine'. His intention was to make people feel the divine order and live accordingly.

Man, being essentially susceptible to a rational approach, requires a philosophical approach to religious practices, so that a meaning may be attached to all functions. It is only here that Rāmaṇuja's extraordinary brilliance shines. He has integrated the philosophic Absolute with the theistic Absolute, and it is his greatest contribution; other problems automatically solve themselves. Through this identity, the steps that he advised in religion to obtain the benign grace of God get equated with the practices adumbrated in the philosophical and metaphysical approach to obtain salvation. The pith of Viśiṣṭādvaita thought is the awareness that *jīvātman* and *act*—matter—are only a *śarīra* (body) or a *prakāra* (mode) for His essence. Hence, just as the limbs of an individual help man—the *jīva*—to function and get self-satisfaction indirectly and not directly, similarly the *jīva*, who is a limb of *Īśvara*, must consider himself as a willing

instrument of God. Through this concept, the ego of an individual is completely eliminated and the state of actionlessness is ushered in, thus eliminating all chances of rebirth. It is only to make this central theme of this system of philosophy get into the minds and hearts of all people that Rāmānuja devised the routine of integrated life.

Among the works credited to him, five, viz., the *Sribhāṣya*, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, *Vedānta-dīpa*, *Vedānta-sāra* and *Gītābhāṣya* elaborate the metaphysical and philosophical aspects of the three entities called *cit*, *acit* and *Īśvara* and their mutual involvement. The three *gadyas*, viz., *Saraṇāgati*, *Vaikuṇṭha* and *Śrīraṅga*—are descriptive in content and explain the aspect of *Īśvara* as the refuge of all souls, His abode, His attitude towards the *jīva* and vice-versa. The last one is named *Nitya* meaning 'Daily'.

This work is a vital link between the two spheres of activities, viz., the philosophical and academic on the one side, and the practical and pragmatic life on the other. It is only in this work that one can find the real Rāmānuja and his ardent devotion to *Īśvara*. It is only this kind of ardour alone that he expects in each and every one of his followers.

The *Śrutis* declare : "With whomsoever He is pleased, to him alone He reveals Himself." It is a profound problem in religious and philosophical schools as to how to get His pleasure. Perhaps philosophy might recommend eventually that ethical and moral actions in one's life might attract His attention and grace. Religion might suggest that devotion and worship at His feet might enable one to go nearer to Him. But all these may be felt to be beyond the capacity of the common man. It is only to reach him that Rāmānuja's large heart had felt agitated, and fulfilment came in the method of his (Rāmānuja's) integration of religion and philosophy.

To achieve this, Rāmānuja adopts only *bhakti*, of the three paths enunciated by the *Bhagavad Gītā*. But his concept of *bhakti* is different from the significances associated with that word. In fact, the *Bhāgavata* refers to nine aspects of *bhakti* viz., *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *pādasevana*, *smaraṇa*, *arcana*, *vandana*, *dāsyā*, *sakhyā* and *ātmanivedana*. In Rāmānuja's treatment of *bhakti* in practice, not only these nine aspects are found, but also something more which others have not thought of. That is, self-effacement in every action, to feel happy that *Īśvara* has used one to get His purpose accomplished. In fact, it was Rāmānuja's desire that in each and every action of a human being, the awareness of God must reflect the dependence of the *jīva* on Him. In this context, every function discharged in that attitude will become *tapas*, *homa* and sacrifice. Thus, it is no wonder for the Viśiṣṭādvaitins to treat the whole *Veda*, i.e., the *Karmakāṇḍa* and *Jñānakāṇḍa* as one unit and not to discard the earlier portion as superfluous. This is known as *aikakaṇṭha-vāda*.

The sacrifices ordained in the earlier part of the *Veda* are also to be performed, since they are intended to please God. He calls that too as *ārādhana*. The word means 'to please with service' and is derived from the root '*rādḥ*' with '*ā*.' Since God has been the source for that section also, its teachings and injunctions only reflect His wish and none rejecting His desire may aspire to go anywhere near Him. Even though Rāmānuja is of the opinion that every action of an individual as enjoined by the *Dharma-sāstras* is an act to please God, yet following the tradition and also to emphasise the identification fully and completely, he lays down the worship of Nārāyaṇa by every individual at a stipulated part of the day.

The sequence of time and division of the day for assigning different functions are done as per the *Pāñcarātra* texts. The



diurnum is divided into five parts as *abhigamana*, *upādāna*, *ījyā*, *svādhyāya* and *yoga*. It is at the *ījyā* part of the day that one must perform the worship (*ārādhana*) of Viṣṇu. Again, in *yoga* at the night before sleeping, one must seek meditation on and communion with the Lord. This arrangement of time and functions suits Rāmānuja's scheme of religious practice, and he adopts as such the motif and lays down the rules to be practised for the accomplishment of the cherished principles of 'divine life'. He does not delineate all the activities and functions for the whole day or for all the five sectors, but enunciates the nature of the observance only in regard to the first three. In that, too, the functional procedure for the third, viz., *ījyā*, is the burden of his song in the *Nitya-grantha*.

A close study of this work will make one understand what aspect of the metaphysical question has been blended in the essential ingredient of religion by Rāmānuja. The work starts with the expression—"Then shall I explain the method (procedure) of worship of Bhagavān to the *paramaikāntin*—one to whom (God) is the only goal". He does not explain or amplify the term '*paramaikāntin*'. Even Vaṅgivaṁśeśvara, an immediate disciple of Rāmānuja, who wrote a gloss on *Nitya* in the form of *Kārikās* in 528 *ślokas* does not explain the word, and he refers to its denotation by the word '*Niyatendriyaḥ*' i.e., one who has self-control.

The non-explanation is no lapse in this context since it was very well known in the times of Rāmānuja. Yāmuna in the *Gitārthasaṅgraha* has given a very clear definition of the *paramaikāntin*; verses 29 to 32 speak only about his characteristics. Vedānta Desika quotes this section *verbatim* in his *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* while explaining the *Nityagrantha* aspect in commenting. The salient features are: He must be aware fully of the limitations of the individual soul and the qualities of

Īśvara. Such a person is technically called *jñānin* in the *Gītā*. He must pin his life on Bhagavān. His pleasure and pain are to be reckoned only in terms of association or communion with God and not in terms of other kinds of fulfilment or frustration that others have commonly. His functions are only to sing the glories of God, praise Him and be attuned to Him. Realising that his life is only by His Grace, he must deploy all his sense-organs only to His service. All this must be done with zeal and interest. It must be done with full pleasure. A person of this stature will be afraid of none. Only this kind of fearlessness, the Tamil poet Bhārati too sang in his stirring lyric, "There is no fear, no fear from any source". Vedānta Deśika, continuing the trend, writes: "This attitude must be from waking up from the bed to late in the night as one goes to sleep."

A synoptical review of the *Nitya* will enable one to understand Rāmanuja and his principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita well. The whole content of this work may be arranged in 15 layers or tiers. It begins with the rising up from sleep. Seated in the bed itself, one has to think that God has desired to please Himself with/through one, even though He has nothing to obtain and everything accomplished, by allowing one to do this day's work at His pleasure. Then he leaves the bed, goes out and (after attending to calls of nature) reaches the tank or any other water source to have his ablutions. First, the bath is by earth (mud) with appropriate *mantras*. Then the watery bath follows. The ritual performance for the day starts only after the bath. After completing the daily routine of rituals, he goes to the place where the family deity is kept. That may be a *sālagrāma* or icon.

With initial utterance of his desire to perform the *pūjā*, the cleansing part by *mantra* starts. This process is called *bhūtaśuddhi*. In this stage, one knows that one's body is made

up of five elements and, hence, through appropriate *mantras* and *mudrās*, one disintegrates the body mentally into its five elements and dries them up and burns them by placing them in the right foot of Bhagavān. The *Vāyumantra* and *Sūryamantra* are supposed to do the purifying. Then, being thus purified, the elements are placed on the left foot of Bhagavān through which the Gaṅgā and nectar flow. Thus, the purified elements get re-integrated by a nectar bath. After this, one becomes eligible to approach God for worship.

Before the direct *pūjā* is started, mental worship must be carried out. This is only to fix the mind perfectly and fully on the Lord. Secondly, there may be many lapses in the actual physical performance, whereas in the mental performance an ideal situation can be visualized. Then only the actual *pūjā* starts. The arrangement of cups and filling them with water and spices are detailed. Next follows a request to the Lord to permit Himself to be worshipped. Before that the door-keepers (*dvārapālakas*), Ādiśeṣa, and other attendants are requested to permit him to have a petition to God for the specific purpose of worship.

Then, having secured the permission of the Lord, one starts the regular *pūjā* (*ārādhana*). The first phase is offering *Mantrāsana*. In this stage, the Lord and His consorts are invoked to gracefully concede to the request and accept the *arghya*, *pādyā* and *ācamaniya*. These offerings of water are repeated at every phase. The next phase is *Snānāsana*. In this, the Lord and His consorts are given a bath. At that time, the *Puruṣasūkta*, *Śrīsūkta* and other Vedic chants are recited. After the bath, the Lord and His consorts are dried with a dry towel and conducted to the next stage called *Alaṅkārasana*. Here they are all clad in pure silk cloth, and garlands and flowers are offered. Incense is burnt, and once

again *arghya*, *pāḍya* and *ācamana* follow as before. Now the Lord is pleased to hear the *stotras* and *arcana*s offered by the devotee. The next stage is *Bhojyāsana*. In this all the food-preparations for the day are placed before the Lord. All items are cleansed with *mantras* and offered with the chiming of the bell. Again, He is taken to *Mantrāsana*, and at that stage the concluding worship in the form of reciting the end-portions of *Upaniṣads*, *prabandhas* etc., called by the term '*Sāttumarai*' is conducted. Now the last phase is to follow and that is *Paryāṅkāśana*. In this the Lord and His consorts are conducted to a couch for rest. He is requested to go to sleep (*Yoganidra*) in the company of consorts (for the benefit of the world). Prostration and perambulations follow and the *pūjā* is complete.

Now the *tirtha* and other remnants of Lord's partaking are to be offered to Viśvakṣena—His chief commandant. He has a title because of this as '*Śeṣāsana*', that is one who eats the remnants of Lord's eating. Then, in the descending order, all the *ācāryas* are to be given the remnants as *prasāda*. The worshipper now tastes the *tirtha* first and then shares that with others. Thus, the worship becomes complete. Though the process seems to be simple it will take at least one hour to complete in the way Rāmaṇuja has prescribed. All are eligible to perform this, irrespective of caste, as there is no mention of any prohibition or exclusion.

Now the salient points for observation are as follows :

(1) Rāmaṇuja uses the word '*yāga*' in connection with the performance of worship as described before. The word '*yāga*' means in common parlance and in technical sense only a sacrifice as enunciated in the *Karmakāṇḍa* of the *Veda*. The word, '*yāga*', is repeated twice in the *Nitya*. This is not without some significance. It only connotes that Rāmaṇuja,

after a careful scrutiny of *Vedas*, *Kalpasūtras*, *Upaniṣads* and *Āgamas*, has concluded that all these are meant to please God and hence the words, 'pūjā' and 'yāga', are synonymous.

(2) After a careful performance of *yāga* or worship, one must necessarily perform what is known as *sāttvika-tyāga*. By this, three-fold sense-impressions (*saṁskāras*) are negated. They are *svarūpa-tyāga*, *karṭṛva-tyāga* and *phala-tyāga*. One negates oneself as an entity, thereby the ego vanishes and one becomes an instrument for God. Secondly, the idea of being an agent for an action is wiped out; thus egotism disappears. Thirdly, one relinquishes the result or fruit. Thus, the action does not belong to oneself. So much so, though the action is performed, nothing accrues to his credit, and death in that life will be the last death.

It is only to impress the essential principles of the *Gītā* that action leads to birth and death and also to escape from their clutches, that Rāmānuja has effectively presented the manner of leading a divine life in this world. In fact, Rāmānuja has anticipated the Marxian philosophy long ago and made over all property including oneself to the Lord (Viṣṇu) and hence the justification for the significance of this name as all-pervading! In Rāmānuja's ideal portrayal of life, there is no conflict and no clash since all are elevated to a higher plane than that of what is purely materialistic and mundane.

---

# Tamil Literature on Rāmanuja

DR. G. DAMODARAN, M.A., M.Litt., Ph.D., Dip. in Linguistics,  
*Tirupati.*

It is definitely known that Sri Rāmanuja lived from 1017 to 1137 A.D. This period is considered to be in the medieval period in the history of Tamil literature. Earlier, Tamil literature had been divided into the pre-Sangam period, the period of the Sangams, the post-Sangam period or dark period, and, lastly, the so called Pallava period or period of religious revival when religious literature flourished in Tamil Nadu.

During the 10th to 13th centuries there was a revival or renaissance of Tamil literature. Many *kāvya*s came to be written. Tamil kings were ruling in Cola and Paṇḍya countries and a filip was given to literature and other arts in the period.

It was during this time that Sri Rāmanuja was born at Śrīperumbūdūr, studied at Kañcipuram, toured North India and then settled down at Śrīraṅgam till he had to leave for Melkote in Mysore State for religious reasons. Unfortunately he did not get proper encouragement from the Tamil kings during his life-time.

We all know the history of Sri Rāmanuja. How he gathered a band of devotees around him in Śrīraṅgam and how he set right the affairs of the temple there and later on of that at Tirupati are well known. His contribution to Śrīvaiṣṇavism and establishment of the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy by the influence of the writings of Āzhvār saints who lived between the

fifth and the tenth century in the Tamil country is also very well known.

Let us try to find out what Śrī Rāmānuja has done to the Tamil language and literature during his life-time and what we come to know about him from later-day Tamil literature.

First of all, it has to be remembered that among the three *Ācāryas* who expounded the three well known philosophies of Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita, Śrī Rāmānuja is the only one who was born in the present-day Tamil country. However, some have argued that he did not know Tamil because he did not write any book in Tamil. All his nine treatises are in Sanskrit. This is not the whole truth ; I have proved this a decade ago in an article (refer to *Vazhi Viḷakku*). A careful and deep study reveals that Śrī Rāmānuja not only knew Tamil, but also that he had a deep knowledge in some of the classics in Tamil, though he did not write in it. But that need not be discussed in detail here at present.

The reason for Rāmānuja writing his works in Sanskrit seems to be that he wished that his concepts should be accepted by scholars who were following other faiths and also that ideas should be known to a large number of scholars throughout India. If the intelligentsia accepted an idea, then it would be easier to convince others also. One should not forget that Sanskrit was then the right instrument for this purpose—see M. N. Srinivas's 'Sanskritisation' in *Social Change in Modern India*.

Many of his disciples used to deliver discourses in a language which was an admixture of Sanskrit and Tamil, called *Maṇipravāḷa*.

There are four stray verses in Tamil (*Tanians*) attributed to 'Udaiyavar' i.e., Śrī Rāmānuja. They appear as prefatory to

*Perumāḷ Tirumozhi* by Kulaśekhara, *Periya Tirumozhi* and *Tiru-vezhu-kūṭṭirukkai* by Tirumaṅgai Mannan and *Periya Tiruvantādi* by Nammāzhvār. Apart from these, in the famous commentary on *Tiruvāymozhi* (viz., *Iṭu*) there are more than fifty places where we find the interpretation pointed out by Śrī Rāmānuja being different from those of the earlier commentators. A few of them have been explained by the writer of this article in the paper referred to above. So we may safely maintain that Śrī Rāmānuja's love for Tamil classics and also his mastery of and profound insight into the niceties of the language deserves deep study.

*Rāmānuja Nūṟṟantādi.* :

Now let me turn to a particular work in Tamil which was composed during Rāmānuja's life-time by one of his own disciples by name Tiruvaraṅgattu Amudanār. That work has been included as a part and parcel of the *Nālāyiram* itself. The scholars have given it a status equal to the verses of the Āzhvārs. The work is named as *Rāmānuja Nūṟṟantādi*. It is called by Śrīvaiṣṇavites as *Prapanna Gāyatri*. It contains one hundred and eight verses. Instead of giving the life and other details about Śrī Rāmānuja, as the title suggests, the work actually explains the love Śrī Rāmānuja had towards Āzhvārs and Ācāryas and also some of his main concepts. There is a traditional account also which points out that Śrī Rāmānuja did not prefer that a treatise should be compiled on himself. He wanted only the religious and philosophical concepts acceptable to Śrīvaiṣṇavites to be explained in it. I would like to refer to some stanzas of that work to show how Śrī Rāmānuja was respected in his days by his followers and considered to have made his contributions according to his contemporaries.

The first stanza itself states that Śrī Rāmānuja was the disciple of the famous poet and saint, Māran or Śaṭakopan<sup>1</sup>.



The author rejoices to get a place among the lucky devotees of Śrī Rāmānuja.<sup>2</sup> He is described as a person who cherished the twelve Āzhvār saints in his heart of hearts. He was propagating the tenets of Śaṭakopa which are in Tamil and which form the essence of the *Vedas*.<sup>3</sup>

The two earlier *ācāryas*, Śrī Nāthamuni and Śrī Yāmuna, were also considered to be preceptors to Rāmānuja. He had come to the world on account of his grace to redeem the world from its sufferings <sup>4</sup>. He was the cause to spread the flood of *bhakti* that was in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>5</sup> On account of the birth of Śrī Rāmānuja, many souls got wisdom and attained *mokṣa*. All the three types of Tamil writings (prose, poetry and drama), the four *Vedas* and virtuous ways to attain God were made known to them. All the good people pray only to Śrī Rāmānuja.<sup>6</sup> His feet are the only refuge to one and all. They are the *upāya* to attain salvation. This is an important thing one has to know. Śrī Rāmānuja had learnt the *Veda* revealed to Śrī Śaṭakopa and with its help subdued (conquered) the six religions (or philosophies).<sup>7</sup>

Śrī Rāmānuja, says the author of this work, has done a wonderful deed in helping him to drive away all his sins and bringing him nearer the feet of God.<sup>8</sup> Śrī Raṅganātha would be present (i) whenever the sweet music of *Tiruvāymozhi* was sung, (ii) in the mind of the learned *jñānins*, and (iii) in all the *divya-deśas* where the Lord resides with His Consort.<sup>9</sup>

The author says that his mind and soul would prostrate before the glory of the devotees of Śrī Rāmānuja who had explained ably the essence of the *Gītā*. So he feels that there is no one equal to him in the vast world.<sup>10</sup> Further he asserts that the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmānuja are as enjoyable to him as Tiruveṅkaṭam, Vaikuṇṭham and the Milky Ocean are enjoyable to Śrī Rāmānuja. So, he entreats for a place at his feet.<sup>11</sup> He

also emphatically says that his service in word, deed and thought would always be to śrī Rāmaṇuja's devotees who never forget the efficacy of his name.<sup>12</sup> He goes a step further and says, in all his many births or sufferings on account of many diseases in future, he would like only one thing, i.e., to be made a servant and devotee of Rāmaṇuja's devotees.<sup>13</sup>

In a few verses we find that some of the activities, ideals and ideas of śrī Rāmaṇuja are depicted. Some references are given below.

(1) In the vast universe, the protector of all the lives or souls (*Iraivan*) is *Māyan* or Viṣṇu only.<sup>14</sup>

(2) All the souls and the whole world are the property of the Lord or God. This has been established by śrī Rāmaṇuja.<sup>15</sup>

(3) śrī Rāmaṇuja has been compared to an elephant. The must the elephant possesses is the joy derived by him from the sweet songs of Māraṇ's Tamil. The stick the elephant has taken is his knowledge of *Vedas*. With this śrī Rāmaṇuja the elephant subdued the debaters who were against him.<sup>16</sup>

(4) It is said that the *puṛuṣārthas* are four, viz. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. Out of these four, *kāma* is really the love shown to the Lord (Kappan). All the other three are to support this, in the view of śrī Rāmaṇuja.<sup>17</sup>

(5) The lion of śrī Rāmaṇuja consumed the mellifluous songs of Nammāzhvār and, on account of the strength derived from it, he conquered the Vedic scholars.<sup>18</sup>

*Upadeśarattinamālai*. Among the *ācāryas* śrī Rāmaṇuja occupies a very prominent place. What is the reason for it? The last *ācārya*, śrī Maṇavaṇa Mārmuni gives the reason for it in his *Upadeśarattinamālai* as follows.

The earlier *ācāryas* used to give their *Upadeśa* or teaching to their disciples only and that too on certain conditions. But Śrī Rāmānuja, on account of his enormous compassion towards humanity, declared that ‘the *mantras* can be taught to all who show an interest to know and follow them.’ By this, Śrī Rāmānuja has deviated from the old tradition. On account of this speciality—because he had helped in the growth and development of this religion—the religion itself was named after him as *Emberumānār’s darśana*. The author declares that on account of this, the birthday of Śrī Rāmānuja i.e., the Tiruvādirai day in the month of Cittirai, is an important day for Vaiṣṇavas, more important than the birthdays of the Āzhvārs.<sup>19</sup>

*Ārti-prabandham*. This is another small work containing sixty verses on Śrī Rāmānuja written by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni. He has also composed in Sanskrit a poem of twenty stanzas on Śrī Rāmānuja called *Yatirāja-vimśati*. In the *Ārti-prabandham*, Maṇavāḷa Māmuni says ; “Yatirāja is the father, mother, wife and children and great wealth and everything to me.” (Stanza 3) In stanza 30, he describes how he visualised the appearance of Śrī Rāmānuja. The redemptive grace, flowing from the compassion of Śrī Rāmānuja, is set out in stanza 41.

*Other works* : Apart from these major works there are a few smaller treatises, which eulogise Śrī Rāmānuja. One is by the famous Piḷḷai-p-perumāl Aiyāṅgar, who is the author of eight treatises in Tamil, namely *Aṣṭa-prabandham*. The name of the work is *Etirājar Antādi*. There, the poet emphasises that on account of the birth of Etirāja, the King of Ascetics, i.e., Śrī Rāmānuja, the path of *śaraṇāgati* had attained a significant place.<sup>20</sup> We find various Vaiṣṇava authors of later days invariably eulogising or praising Śrī Rāmānuja in one or two stanzas at the beginning of their works.

The *Tiruppāvai* of Āṇḍāl, one of the woman saints of the Śrīvaiṣṇava hierarchy, is said to be the quintessence of the *Vedas*. Śrī Rāmānuja had a special liking for that work. He used to recite songs from it, while he used to go for his daily *bhikṣā* (soliciting alms for food). So he was called the *Miyar of Tiruppāvai*. The relation between Śrī Rāmānuja and Śrī Āṇḍāl was said to be that of a brother and sister. That is why the *vāzhittirunāmam* (verse of eulogy) on Āṇḍāl says : ‘Hail to Āṇḍāl who is the younger sister of the great ascetic of Śrīperumbūdūr’.

#### *Some Other Works :*

Śrī T. S. Rajagopalan of Madras has written recently a book in verse form on the *ācāryas*. In it a section on Śrī Rāmānuja contains more than four hundred stanzas. I would like to refer to just one stanza which shows the author's devotion to Śrī Rāmānuja : ‘The Lord residing at Parama Pata, Tiruveṅkaṭam and Mālirumśolai, permanently resides in the heart or mind of the King of Ascetics, Śrī Rāmānuja. So, with a pure heart, if one prays to the feet of Śrī Rāmānuja, that is equivalent to praying to all the *divya-deśas* of the Lord who wears the *tulasī* garland.’<sup>21</sup>

Further, while summing up the teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja, the author gives the following verse : (1) It advises people to read the *Śrībhāṣya* which shows the way to attain God, or otherwise, (2) to recite with devotion the songs of the Āzhvars and get salvation, or (3) to reside in a *divya-deśa* of the Lord of the worlds, or (4) to live at least in a hut in Tirunarayaṇapuram, or (5) to get an *ācāryā* and recite the *Dvaya mantra* and associate oneself with the devotees of the Lord and not with others.” (Stanza 479).

#### *Emperumānār :*

Once Śrī Rāmānuja said to his *Guru* as follows : “If one suffers for the sake of the good of the world, it seems to my

mind, that is worthy of appreciation. On account of compassion, even if I have committed wrong, revered sir, kindly forgive me for it." This answer was revealing to his *Guru*, and so he said : "As a man who gathers a lot of money and has preserved it in a safe place, without using it, I have also preserved the *mantra* in my heart. But you have delivered it to all, because of your compassion towards them. You deserve to be called '*Emberumānār*' (meaning greater than '*Emberumān*' or 'God') on account of this quality of helping to drive away darkness from this world." This is the most significant act we find in the life of Śrī Rāmānuja.

Azhagiya Maṇavāla Nāyanār in his *Ācārya Hṛdayam* says : 'Sympathy towards the downtrodden and limitless compassion are found only in the mother (Sītā), the son (Prahlaḍa), the younger brother (Vibhīṣaṇa), him (Śrī Śaṭakopa) and disciple (Śrī Rāmānuja).'<sup>22</sup> In this way Śrī Rāmānuja's quality is praised by other *ācāryas*. Such is his greatness.

#### REFERENCES

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Rāmānuja Nūṟṟantādi</i> (RN.), 1 | 12. RN, 80                                     |
| 2. RN, 3                               | 13. RN, 107                                    |
| 3. RN, 18                              | 14. RN, 31                                     |
| 4. RN, 32                              | 15. RN, 53                                     |
| 5. RN, 37                              | 16. RN, 64                                     |
| 6. RN, 44                              | 17. RN, 40                                     |
| 7. RN, 45                              | 18. RN, 64                                     |
| 8. RN, 52                              | 19. <i>Upadeśarattinamālai</i> ,<br>28 37. 38, |
| 9. RN, 60                              | 20. <i>Etirājar Antādi</i> , 1                 |
| 10. RN, 68                             | 21. <i>Vaiṇava Ācāryarhaḷ</i> , 521            |
| 11. RN, 76                             | 22. <i>Ācārya Hṛdayam</i> , 204.               |

# The Influence of the 'Divya Prabandha' on Rāmanuja

PROFESSOR K. A. MANAVALAN, M.A., B.O.L., Madras.

Śrī Veda Vyāsa composed the *Brahma Sūtras* or the *Sāriraka Mīmāṃsa* as the foremost treatise on Upaniṣadic thoughts. Vyāsa himself was reborn as Vakuḷābharanapperrumāl or Nāmmazhwār and gave an exhaustive treatise on the *Brahma Sūtras* in a chaste, sweet and charming style in the form of the Tamil *Divya Prabandha* known by the name '*Tīrvāymozhi*'. To correlate the ideas of these two, as it were, he was once again born as Śrī Rāmanuja. This idea is well brought out in the verse :

‘Purā sūtrair Vyāsaḥ śruti-sata-śiro'rtham grathitavan  
vivavre tacchrāvyam vakuḷa-taratām etya sa punaḥ |  
ubhavetau granthau ghaṭayitumalam yuktibhirasaṁ  
punarjajñe rāmāvaraja iti sa brahmanamukurap ||

Those who belong to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* should have equal fervour in both the *Vedāntas* (*Ubhaya Vedānta*—the Samskṛt and Tamil scriptures).

Śrī Rāmanuja, in his *Śrī-bhāṣya*, *Gitā-bhāṣya* and other works, has incorporated the essential ideas of the great works in Tamil—the *Divya Prabandhas* of the Āzhvārs—having had a deep insight into these texts. If Nāmmazhvar is the mother of *Tīrvāymozhi*, Rāmanuja could well be named its foster-mother. This is well brought out in the lines “*Tamizh maraigal*

*āyiramum inra mudal tāy Śaṭakopan, moimpāl vaḷartta idattāy Irāmāmuḥan*". Further the *Taniyans* (introductory verses of eulogy) "*Āynda perumśīrār Śaṭakopan śentamizh vedam darikkum perāda uḷlam pera*" & "*Maṅgaiyarkon inḍa marai āyiram anaittum taṅgu-manam nī enakkuttā*" respectively praise Rāmānuja and pray to him for the proper retention in memory of the works of Nammāzhvār and Tirumaṅgai Āzhvār in our mind. That the blessings of Śrī Rāmānuja are very essential for such an attainment is evident from the *Taniyans*. It is also worth noting here the phrases in the *Ācārya Hṛdayam* (65): "*Bāṣyakārar idu koṇḍu sūtra-vākyam oruṅga viḍuvār*".

Let us illustrate this with a few examples ;

Śrī Rāmānuja's *maṅgala-śloka* at the beginning of his *magnum opus, Śrībhāṣya*, may be considered. Its first quarter reads thus :—

‘Akhila-bhuvana-janma-sthema-bhaṅgādī-līle’.

The threefold functions of the Supreme Being, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, are well brought out here. They are the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe. The question arises here that even though *sthiti* or *rakṣaṇa* (maintenance) is given in the group as the second component, why should Śrī Rāmānuja repeat it in the second quarter of the verse :

‘Vinata-vividha-bhūta-vrāta-rakṣaika-dīkṣe’?

If we carefully analyse this, the truth will reveal itself. In the *Tiruvāymozhi* stanza, "*Eḷivarumiyalvinan*" (1-3-2), there is a phrase "*Oḷivarumuzhunalam muḍalīla-keḷīla*". By this, it is said that the Supreme Being possesses limitless auspicious virtues. Nāmmāzhvār has further on stated: "*Viḍām teḷīdaru-nīlaimaiyan ozhivilan*", he has declared that the Lord possesses the unique quality of granting the spotless status of Eternal Bliss or *mukti*.

Here our *ācāryas* have posed a question. When the term *oḻivarumuzhunalam* itself connotes the quality of granting *mokṣa*, why should the Āzhvār state it again? To answer, this point is made by themselves, that the Āzhvār has said so only to give special importance to this quality of *mokṣapradatva* in the Lord. It is also brought out with special significance in the *Tiruvāymozhi* stanza (2-8-1), *aṇaivadaravaṇaimel*. Because Nāmmāzhvār has specially treated the quality, Śrī Rāmānuja has also given special significance to this quality by mentioning it again in the second line after it has already been connoted by the term '*stheman*' in the first line. For this the divine words of the Āzhvār are the forerunner.

Further, in the same invocatory stanza, we find special significance attached to the words *brahmaṇi Śrīnivāse*. It is quite evident that this stanza is the gist of the inner meaning of the *Śrībhāṣya*. But in no place in it is there any reference to or association with goddess Śrī. While it is so, it becomes necessary to examine why Śrī Rāmānuja has used the term in the *maṅgaḷa-śloka*. Further scrutiny suggests a reason for it. In the Āzhvār's works there is seldom any mention of the Lord without the attribute *Tiru*. Without the association of Śrī, the thought of the Lord Supreme is rarely conceived. Only to emphasize this an Āzhvār has said, "*tiruvillāttevarait terelmin tevu*" (*Nānmukan Tiruvantādi*, 53). Śrī Rāmānuja has used the term, *Śrīnivāse*, having been deeply captivated by the sacred works of the Āzhvārs.

In the first *sūtra* the word '*brahman*' is explained by Śrī Rāmānuja in his *Śrībhāṣya* thus: "By the word '*brahman*' is denoted the Highest Person who is by nature devoid of all evil and is possessed of hosts of auspicious qualities which are innumerable and unsurpassed in excellence." This contrasts



with the brief explanation offered by Śrī Saṅkara. The only possible basis for this interpretation is the sayings of Nammāzhvār who begins the very first stanza of *Tiruvāymozhi* thus : *uyarvara uyarnalam uḍaiyavan yavanavan, mayarvara madinalam aruḷinan yavanavan*, describing thereby the limitless auspicious qualities of the Supreme Being. Śrī Rāmānuja has fully used this idea and his *bhāṣya* on 'brahman' is almost a true translation of this first stanza of the Āzhvār. Since the works of the Āzhvār everywhere throw light on the auspicious qualities of the Lord, Śrī Rāmānuja, having dived deep into that Ocean of Nectar, has thus given his unique interpretations.

Whether it is the *Gītā-bhāṣya* or the *Śrī-bhāṣya*, the words of Śrī Rāmānuja are indeed touching. For example, wherever there is a reference to the *Parama Puruṣa* in the original texts, Śrī Rāmānuja brings out the greatness of the nature, form, attributes and power of *Brahman*, on the lines of the vision of the Āzhvārs.

Let us see a place in the *Śrī-bhāṣya*. In the last *sūtra* which merely says 'There is no return because the scriptures say so' there is no mention of the *Parama Puruṣa*. But Rāmānuja here points out that the very *śāstra* which upholds the existence of Bhagavān, itself declares that there is no return to those who surrender themselves unto Him. Here it would have been enough to say : "Just as it is made out from the scriptures that there exists the Supreme Person". But he also gives here so many attributes to the Lord thus : "Just as it is made out from the scriptures that there exists the Supreme Person, who is hostile to all evil and is the home of all auspiciousness, who is the cause of the origin etc. of the world, who is entirely distinct from all other things, who is omniscient, who wills the truth, who is the sole ocean of parental affection for those who resort to Him, who is possessed of the highest mercy, who has

dispelled the possibility of there being any one superior or equal to Him, and whose name is the Supreme *Brahman* : similarly it is made out from the scriptures themselves that..... He does not cause them (His worshippers) to return (to this world)".

In his commentary on the concluding stanza of the IX chapter of *Bhagavad Gītā*, while explaining the phrase 'manmanābhava', Śrī Rāmānuja lists out at least eighteen auspicious attributes of Puruṣottama, which will move any reader, even if he be hard-hearted, to shed tears. In this context, Śrī Śaṅkara has just said 'Be one whose mind is placed in Me' while Śrī Madhva has offered no comment.

Some may think that these attributes are redundant. But such an elaborate elucidation is essential here. When Kṛṣṇa enjoins on the *bhakta* to be devoted to Him, how could there be ardent *bhakti*, if such attributes are not given? The only purpose of giving these attributes referring to His essential nature, form and attributes is to ensure in the devotees unstinted devotion or *bhakti* towards Him. It could therefore be said without any hesitation that Śrī Rāmānuja has so explained the *Gītā* and the *Sūtrās* only because of his having dived deep into the *prabandha* of the Āzhvārs.

To cite a few examples of the wonderful phrases in the *prabandhas* of Āzhvārs, we have :

“śenthāmarait taḍaṅkaṇ śeṅkanivāy  
śeṅkamalam śeṅtāmaraiyaḍikkaḷ śeṁpon tiruvuḍambe”;  
—(*Tym*, 2. 5. 1).

“kaivaṇṇam tāmarai vāy kamalam polum,  
kaṇṇiṇaiyum aravindam aḍiyumahde”

(*Tiruneḍuntāṇḍakam*, 21);

and : “*śekkamalarittalar polum kaṅkaikāl śeṅkanivāy  
akkamalattilai poluntirumeni yaḍikaḷukke*”  
(*Tvm.* 9. 7. 3)

Only to those who have drunk the nectar of the poems of the Āzhvārs, such an enlightened thought comes, and only these persons can give expression to such brilliant thoughts.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has spelt out the purpose of His *avatāra* as *Sādhu-paritraṇa*, *duṣkṛti-vināśa* and *dharma-saṁsthāpana* (protection of the virtuous, destruction of the wicked and establishment of *dharma*—*Bhagavad Gītā* IV-8). Why should the Lord incarnate Himself on this earth and suffer the various turmoils that are intended only for the souls bound by *karma*? Why could not He get these things done by the power of His *saṁkalpa* (wish) alone, Himself being *satyasamkalpa* (whose will is unfailingly true)? These questions generally arise in a layman's mind. There is no mention whatsoever of Bhagavān's *avatāras* in the Śāṅkara-*Bhāṣya*. In the Madhva-*Bhāṣya* it is said that the *avatāra* is for sport (*līlārtham*). What Rāmānuja thinks is entirely different.

In his *Śrī Bhāṣya* (I. 1.21) Śrī Rāmānuja quotes the *Gītā* stanza cited above and gives his candid views thus. Only for the protection of the virtuous does the Supreme Being take His various *avatāras*. While punishing the wicked is possible even without His *avatāra*, and just by His *saṁkalpa* (wish) alone, it could not be the main purpose of His *avatāras*. A genuine doubt arises here : why could not protection of the virtuous be done through His *saṁkalpa* like the punishment of the wicked? To this the reply is : while the wicked could be punished by

God's will also, the virtuous could be protected only by the Lord taking the *avatāras*. This, Rāmānuja says emphatically, on the basis of the *prabandhas* of our Āzhvārs. Let us substantiate this with a few examples :

The third quarter of the stanza commences with "*mazhungāda jñānam*" in the *Tiruvāymozhi* (3. 1. 9). Nammāzhvār here means only the *saṁkalpa*jñāna of the Lord. If the Lord carries out the protection of the virtuous through His *saṁkalpa* then there will be a deficiency in His lustre. Only through His *avatāras* does he get His lustre increased. Hence protection of the virtuous could not be possible by His will alone. In the first two lines of the stanza Nammāzhvār has well brought out this aspect. The episode of Gajendra-mokṣa is well-known. When the elephant, Gajendra, called out to the Lord with the word "*Ādimūlame*" (The Primordial One), the Lord rushed to the pond on the back of Garuḍa, killed the crocodile with His discus and saved the devotee. This episode emphasises a truth, i.e., the Lord could have saved the elephant through His *saṁkalpa*. While so, why should He hasten to the pond on Garuḍa's back? We should examine this point here. The Lord could have saved His devotee, Gajendra, by sending His discus. Why should He present Himself there? Posing this question to himself, Nammāzhvār gets the reply from the Lord Himself. The Lord whispers the secret into the Āzhvār's ears. And the Āzhvār gives the reply he got from the Lord in the second line of the stanza. The attribute "*tozhunkādal*" is given to Gajendra: he is immersed in devotion to God. So the Lord does not have much interest in the destruction of the crocodile, nor does Gajendra. Here we

should carefully go through the words of Ganjendra addressed to the Lord : “ Oh Lord ! I do not grieve over my body being devoured by the crocodile. I only crave to offer these flowers in my hand at Your lotus feet personally. I am much gratified to note that You have understood my mind and have come in person to receive the same.” Such enlightened souls like Gajendra, are connoted by the word *sādhū*. To save such devotees it is obligatory on the part of the Lord to come in person, rather than to use His *saṁkalpa* alone.

Thus in the *Bhāṣyas* of Śrī Rāmānuja we have very interesting and thought-provoking subtle points that need careful and patient study from the readers desirous of understanding the influence of the Āzhvārs on him and of knowing the true meaning of the scriptural texts.

---

# Srī Rāmanuja and ‘Ubhaya Vedānta’

DR. K. K. A. VENKATACHARI, PH.D., *Bombay.*

The history behind the term ‘*Ubhaya-vedānta*’ is most significant for it depicts the way in which the hymns of the Āzhvārs came to be considered as *Vedas* in Tamil and the hymns of Nammāzhvār as *Vedāntā* in Tamil. According to the *Ācārya Hrdayam*, the *Vedas* as we know are *śruti*, what is heard, and *anādi* (without beginning or authorship, eternally revealed) and are the scriptural authority, *par excellence*. Tamil is equally *anādi*. Then the hymns of the Āzhvārs are considered in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition to be with ‘beginning’ (*ādi*) from the Āzhvārs only in the sense that they were instruments through which the Supreme Lord, Nārāyaṇa, revealed His will.

We discover the first indications that Sanskrit and Tamil are parallel religious languages, in the hymns of the Āzhvārs themselves. For instance Kulaśekhara in his *Perumāḷ Tirumozhi* says : “When will I with folded hands offer flowers to Him, praising His glory to the supreme satisfaction of my tongue -- (offer flowers) to that Lord, who is reclining at Śrīraṅgam, over the snake-couch where are the people who have severed their bondage ; (the Lord) who is the northern language (*Vadamozhi* i.e., Sanskrit) ; who is the poem of sweet joy in Tamil, who is the leader of *amaras* (immortals) ; who is the lion of cowherds ; who protected the cows by lifting the heavy mountain (of Govardhana). O, my Kappa ! whose colour is that of the ocean, who enjoyed tearing asunder the mouth of the horse-demon.”—(Stanzas 1 to 4).

In the process of describing the Lord who is in His image (*arcā*) form at Srīraṅgam and who takes the form of various *avatāras* etc., Kulaśekhara says pointedly that this Lord is the northern (Sanskrit) language and the poem of sweet joy in Tamil.

Similarly, Tirumaṅkai Āzhvār in his *Tiruneḍuntāṇḍakam* says : “ O heart ! Can you live, if you learn that *mantra*, not forgetting the *mantra* by the very power of the *mantra*, that *mantra* which is the *Vedānta* (*aṇṭaṇar mattu anti*), that one who is the Primordial One for Indra and Brahmā, who is in the form of the five elements such as earth, fire, water and ether, who is in the form of the sound of Tamil which has the power of expression, who is in the form of Sanskrit words, who is in the form of four directions, who becomes the sun and the moon, who is *antaṇa* (the Brahmin), who is not understood even by the celestials...”—(Stanza 4).

The *mantra* which is the *Vedānta*, is the Primordial One, who is in the form of the five elements, in the form of Tamil and also in the form of Sanskrit etc. This stanza by Tirumaṅkai Āzhvār is probably the first reference to *Vedānta* in the form of Tamil and in the form of Sanskrit,

Maturakavi, a direct disciple of Saṭakopa, says about his *guru* : “ He who composed the stanzas through which the inner meaning of the *Veda* of the great *Vediyas* (Brahmins) is established in my heart,”—(*Kaṇṇinuṇ śīruttāmbu*-9).

Maturakavi, who was himself a Brahmin, has accepted that even as the *Upaniṣads* are said to contain the essence of the *Vedas*, similarly the hymns of Nammāzhvār are the Tamil *Vedānta*, containing the essence of the Sanskrit *Vedas*.

While Yāmuna in his *Āgama-prāmāṇya* defined *Pāñcarātra* *Āgama* as one of the branches of the *Veda*, the *Ekāyana Sākhā*,

in order to defend the scriptural authority of these Vaiṣṇava Sanskrit texts, against the accusations of contending schools that they were non-vedic, the elevation of the hymns of the Āzhvārs to the status of Tamil *Veda* was a much slower process and may be characterised as a development within the Śrīvaiṣṇava community itself and not a point of refutation for outside critics.

It is in the *Guruparaṁparā*, however, that we find the traditional account of the collection and preservation of the hymns of the Āzhvārs as a scriptural corpus. This activity is attributed to Nāthamuni, who, it is told, after listening to ten stanzas of Nammāzhvār's hymns dedicated to the Lord at Kumbakonam, decided to collect the remaining hymns of the Āzhvārs lest they should be lost to posterity. After experiencing difficulty in locating the hymns, he decided to go to Kurukūr, the birth-place of Nammāzhvār. Even there no one was able to help him except Parāṅkuśadāśa, a disciple of Maturakavi. According to the *Guruparampara* account, Parāṅkuśadāśa advised Nāthamuni to meditate on Nammāzhvar, repeating Maturakvi's decade of stanzas ten thousand times, because all the hymns of all the Āzhvārs had been lost long before. Following his advice, Nāthamuni received the hymns of the Āzhvārs from Nammāzhvār who appeared before him, pleased by his meditation. After receiving the *Divya Prabandham*, he returned to his native place where he arranged to give all the hymns musical notation.

Underlying the traditional account of the collection of these works, there is no doubt a historical reality, viz. that the hymns of the Āzhvārs were in danger of being lost and that credit goes to Nāthamuni for recovering them and preserving them for posterity. Credit is also given to Nāthamuni for composing a *taniyan* (eulogium or eulogistic



verse) for the text of Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi*: "I bow down to that Ocean of Drāviḍa *Veda* which is a nectar for all *bhaktas* and joy for everyone, which can yield all (important) meanings; which are the words of Śaṭakopa and where you have all the thousand branches (*sākhās*) of the *Upaniṣads*." In this verse which precedes the chanting of the text of Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi*, the thousand branches of the *Upaniṣads* are compared to the thousand stanzas of *Tiruvāymozhi*. Furthermore, this text is called the Drāviḍa (Tamil) *Veda*.

In the *Śatakoparantādi* considered to be a work of the tenth century A.D. and attributed to the great poet, Kamban (author of the *Ṛāmāyaṇa* in Tamil), we find direct mention of the chanting of the hymns of Nammāzhvār when the deity is in procession: "O, Lord! You are going in front of the *Vedas*, they are following You, but my holy son of Kurukūr (Nammāzhvār) is going in front of You." (Stanza-1). From this reference we see that chanters recited Nammāzhvār's hymns at the beginning of the procession, they were followed by the idol of the Lord and then the chanters of *Vedas*. This verse also shows the priority given to the Drāviḍa *Veda* over the Sanskrit *Veda*.

While Yāmuna does not mention the Drāviḍa *Veda* directly, in his *Stotraratna* (Stanza 5) he does pay his homage to the feet of Vakulābharāṇa (Nammāzhvār) whom he calls the first *ācārya*. Many of Yāmuna's ideas are parallel to those of the Āzhvārs (he includes for instance, a direct quote from Kulaśekhara in stanza 26 of his *Stotraratna*).

We are told in the *Guruparamparā* that as part of his temple reforms Rāmānuja included the chanting of the hymns of the *Divya Prabandha*. The author of *Ācārya Hṛdayam* has recorded that Ramanuja used to explain the *Brahma-sūtras* with the aid of *Tiruvāymozhi*.

That the *Divya Prabandhas* had been accepted by Śrīvaiṣṇava Brahmins as equivalent to the Sanskrit *Vedas* and that these had become part of regular worship in Śrīvaiṣṇava temples are quite evident from the concrete reference to *Divya Prabandha* in the *stotras* of some of the direct disciples of Rāmaṇuja like Kūreṣa and his son, Parāśara Bhaṭṭa.

In the *Vaikunṭha Stava*, Kūreṣa says :

“Let us prostrate before the lotus feet of Nammāzhvār, the only refuge for even the indifferent and the uncared-for. Bow before those feet which are simultaneously a unique treasure-house for the *sāttvikas* and an incomparable jewel on their heads.” (Stanza-2).

“Hail to Nammāzhvār who competes with the ocean in his qualities of divine love! Immeasurable is his love for the Lord, even as the full waters of the ocean. Variegated and most wonderful are the myriad moods of his love for Him (the *nava-rasas*) even as the ocean contains unheard-of treasures. Immortal shall he be who is our and our Lord's pride of possession.” (Stanza-3).

The *Atimānuṣastava* (3) and *Sundarabāhustava* (12) may also be referred to.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭa in his *Srīraṅgarājastava* says :

“Salutations to him (Nammāzhvār), who is the quintessence of divine love. I bow to him who has fathered the thousand-branched *Tiruvāymozhi*, the acclaimed Draviḍian *Upaniṣad*.” (Stanza-6).

“Strange are the ways of my Lord, Śrī Raṅgarāja. He condescends to soil Himself with my poor ineffective words—He whom the *Vedas* and the *Prabandhas* vie with each other to describe. But can anyone prevent the baby elephant from sporting with dust soon after a cleansing bath?” (Stanza-16).

In this verse Śrī Raṅganātha is compared to an elephant. Just as the elephant after his bath enjoys pouring dirt over himself again, so the Lord who shines with (the purity) of the Sanskrit and the Tamil *Vedas* makes Himself 'dirty' by the meagre words of Bhaṭṭa. This refers to the loving acceptance of all by the Lord and reveals the poet's modesty.

In addition, Bhaṭṭa has composed two *taniyans* in Tamil for *Tiruvaymozhi* :

'The *Veda* (*Maṛai*) of Tamil in 1000 (stanzas) which are composed on the great fame of Raṅganātha who is at the place where are a number of gardens and rampart walls, has for its first and natural mother, Saṭakopa ; those hymns are nursed by Rāmānuja as a loving foster-mother '.

'The *Veda* which is with the *rāga* (melody) of the Lord Kurukai (i.e., Nammāzhvār), deals with the following : the supreme position of the Lord (*iṛainilai*), the true nature of the soul (*uyirnilai*), the proper means to obtain Him (*neṛi*), the obstructions for the above (*taḍai*) such as fate (*ūzhvinai*) ; and the life (*vāzhvu* i.e., the fruit), which ensues as the result. '

In these two verses by Bhaṭṭa, we have explicit references to Nammāzhvār's one thousand hymns (*Tiruvāymozhi*) as the Tamil *Veda*. He associates Rāmānuja with nursing the hymns of the Āzhvārs. The five-fold subject matter of Nammāzhvār's *Veda* which is delineated in the second verse was later developed in a work called the *Arthapañcaka* by Piḷḷailokācārya.

There are several other references that deserve mention. Azhakiyapperumāl Nāyanār (12—13 century A.D.) in his work, *Acārya Hṛdayam*, discusses elaborately the point that the Tamil language of Agastya is as eternal as Sanskrit. This receives corroboration from a source entirely alien to Tamil and Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The *Līlātilakam*, a Malayalam grammar on the

language of *Maṇipravāla*, refers to Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi* as the Drāviḍa *Veda*.

In the works of Vedānta Deśika the point is well established. He refers to the Āzhvārs as the modern incarnations of Viṣṇu (*abhinava-daśāvatāra*) and says that he is able clearly to understand the portions of the *Veda*, which are not so clear themselves, after studying the hymns of Āzhvārs such as Poigai, Pūtam etc. (See *Guruparamparā-prabhāvam*, Stanza 18). Furthermore, he devotes a whole work to the idea of the Tamil *Upaniṣad*; it is called the *Draṁiḍopaniṣad-tātparya-raṁnāvaḷi*. He claims in Stanza 2 that he is providing the essence of Nammāzhvār's works for those who are not able to enjoy the original :

‘Having been requested by the learned men who are not able to enjoy this original work (of Nammāzhvār), Veṅkaṭeśa by his wisdom constituting the Mountain Mantara churns the Milky Ocean of Śaṭajit's (i.e., Nammāzhvār's) *Upaniṣad*, takes the essence of the qualities and ties up the group of gems which came out from the hundred tens of waves.’

Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi* is referred to in that passage as it has ‘one hundred tens’, in other words about one thousand verses. Just as one strings a group of gems into a necklace, so Vedānta Deśika implies that he will string together the jewels of ‘essential meaning’ found in Nammāzhvār's work. In verse 5, he goes on to compare *Tiruvāymozhi* with the *Veda* :

‘The first twenty stanzas condense exhaustively the *Sārirakānta* (*Vedānta*). These twenty stanzas clearly explain the meaning of the *Ṛg Veda*, which has a beautiful reading. This work (Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi*) follows in its thousand hymns the *Sāma Veda* which has one thousand branches (*sākhās*) with melody. We can see as well, the *Yajur Veda* in the decades which are full of pregnant meaning. The *Atharva*

*Veda* shines (with its eight branches) which are found in the *Tiruvāymozhi* as *rasas*'. Here Vedānta Deśika compares aspects of the *Tiruvāymozhi* with the *Vedānta*, and the four *Vedas*. Sometimes the comparison is only implied ; for instance, just as the *Atharva Veda* has eight branches, so the *Tiruvāymozhi* has eight *rasas*,

The topics of 'Nammāzhvār's *Veda*' are outlined in stanza 118 of *Dravidopaniṣad tātparyaratnāvalī* : 'Nammāzhvār in his *Veda* revealed everything to be understood in the *śāstras* such as the following topics : the *ātman* (soul) is different from the *deha* (body) ; the Lord is the Ruler ; the *upāya* (means) to obtain His grace and his Supreme Abode (*niśśreyas*) ; sinning against Him is cause for *tāpa* (trouble) ; the glory of His devotees ; following them (the devotees) can remove the confusion in the heart'.

After mentioning these six topics, which are contained in Nammāzhvār's *Veda*, the quintessence of all the *śāstras*, Vedānta Deśika devotes the remaining verses in this work to a condensation of the decades and summaries of the hundreds.

Consequently, from the above references we can conclude that the concept of *Drāviḍa Veda* had been largely accepted at least by the 13th century.

In the 15th century Azhakiyamaṇavaḷa Jiyar wrote two works on the subject entitled *Drāviḍopaniṣad-saṅgati* (the connected sequence of thought in *Drāviḍopaniṣad*) and *Śrībhāṣya-drāviḍāgamādyadaśaka-dvandvaikaṇṭhya* (the identity of the meaning of the *Śrībhāṣya* with the first two decades of *Drāviḍāgama* i.e., the first twenty stanzas of *Tiruvāymozhi*). By this time it was well established that the *Vedas* in Tamil and Sanskrit have the same teachings.

---

# **The Enduring Elements in Śrī Rāmānuja's Thought**

DR. P. K. SUNDARAM, M.A., PH.D., *Madras.*

---

## **I**

Śrī Rāmānuja was responsible for a philosophy which was rich, live and vibrant, most concrete and compact in its method and message. Harmony was its soul and substance. It did not do violence to any segment of life and reality ; did not dismiss any fact of existence as a recalcitrant aberration or a cancerous surd. It had all the virtues of a wholesome integration leaving no rough edges or loose ends.

Rāmānuja tested a theory by its ability to comprehend consistently and explain the facts without residue. A theory should fit the facts, not force them into its fold as into a straight-jacket. One does not start with a preconceived notion and look for instances that will suit it and explain away the rest, which is rather a very unscientific thing to do. A hypothesis should be conceived in the light of the nature of the facts and be adequate to them and their variety. This was what Newton meant when he declared, "I do not make hypotheses". Rāmānuja had no use for hypotheses that were not dictated by hard realities crying for coherence and conciliation. Rāmānuja did not invent harmonies, but discovered them lying there in wait for cognizance. Down from Brahmā to a blade of grass, things partake of a structural

order and the music of the spheres is heard by those who would fain listen. With Rāmānuja it takes all sorts of things to make a world. It is astonishing how he discerns this sweet harmony, even in quarters least suspected to have possessed it.

If we use the imagery of the *Gītā*, Rāmānuja's Ultimate is an inverted triadic pyramid with the radical base above as the apex and the multitude of creation spreading out below. The categories of creation are the conscious souls and the unconscious entities. But the distinction is not dichotomous, which it would be if the categories are mutually contradictory. Though it is true ordinarily that the conscious principle is the opposite of the non-conscious, though the spiritual is the very antithesis of the material, yet in Rāmānuja's theory, and that is his genius, the souls and the physical world are the vital moments of the Supreme Being and thus coalesce in a common substratum. The sweetness of the mango is different from its colour, and this can never harmonize except in the mango which is the unifying nucleus of both. The analogical model of a substance as the uniting ground of the different qualities like taste and colour is an irrefutable fact of experience. Things do hang together in a self-established harmony and appear and exist as an integrated whole with a purpose and a design otherwise impossible either to conceive or fulfil. One cannot imagine a mango otherwise than what it is. Its design and structure follow a logic which is not imposed from without but flowers from within.

One can hardly understand a flower or a fruit if one looks at them from outside and trace the steps of their growth and development mechanically as though they were gadgets constructed like an automobile. A gadget is a device, an artefact; it lacks an inner law which is the very soul of a thing.

The world of nature is more like a flower and a fruit than like a motor car in the assembly line. It is more like a tree growing in nature than a house built by a man. In a flower or a fruit or a tree, there is an inner logos, as the Stoics said, which makes them what they are. The function and the form of the flower is determined by this inner vitality and, in that sense, the flower is the final fulfilment of that law and the logos. Law and the logos are the very negation of capricious chaos and contentless emptiness. Consequently, the physical world, in Rāmānuja's thought, is no more a disvalue to be discounted or discountenanced as the delirium of a diseased imagination, but an integral part of the Supreme Reality designed to serve its purposes and goal and to expressing and, to that extent, revealing (not concealing), the Reality in a concrete understandable way. When we live in the world, we are in God. Hence in Rāmānuja's thought, life as it is lived in its ordinary sense of that term, is a genuine participation in God's scheme. It is at once seen that here the world is, instead of being denied as a misfortune, affirmed as the most authentic expression of a divine logos. What one does here has a meaning. Its delights are apportioned in tune with the will of God. We are living in a world which is, as much as we ourselves are, a co-ordinate in God's system. Yet, if we think of it by itself in abstraction (which is by the way an impossible task because there is nothing like mere abstraction or bare indeterminacy in Rāmānuja's system), it is sheer nothing.

God is not merely the in-dweller (which is but passive and so useless witnessing), but an active controller and ruler. In this sense God is the moving spirit and a willing participant in His creation. He is the soul of souls and the soul in all that exists, material and spiritual alike. Hence matter is not antinomial to spirit, but is a helpful partner in the total enterprise. Man needs the world as much as the world needs



him. Creation is now an agreeable dwelling place, a theatre for moral exercise. Such is the harmony that Rāmānuja discovered in the very heart and constitution of things, and its value and vitality lie in the utter simplicity of the concept. God as the ruler and controller from within of the elements of the souls and the world, making them the subordinate realities vitally related to Himself, is the simplest counterpart of the laws governing the universe discovered by the physical sciences. It is the genius of Rāmānuja to have discovered this in philosophy and to have organically incorporated the world of souls and matter into the very structure of Reality. The advantages of this insight have been indicated already

## II

Rāmānuja's treatment of the world, *inter alia*, as a real and as the very attribute of the Reality is founded on his criteriology which again is a testimony to his great sense of harmony.

Change and time are to him processes of history and are real. The practical as well as philosophical consequences of this position are at once evident. Change of posture and position is not abandonment of reality of oneself. On the contrary, change presupposes reality. When a thing changes, it changes without changing, which appears to be a paradox on the first look. A mere change is a logical impossibility. It should involve a continuity in spite of the change. Yet that which changes cannot be said to be the inessential part of the changing entity. In short, a thing that changes does not become another. What takes place in change is only a continuous growth where the past is gathered into the present. The thing does not contradict itself by changing. As such, change is not a mark of un-reality, though it is a mark of

impermanence. Impermanence does not render a thing an illusion. History is a real process wherein the souls work out their destiny. Rāmānuja thus scores another harmony wherein time and eternity are not mutually opposed, but constitute the factors of the process and the goal, reconciled in the unity of God. There is no violent denial of a fact of the given experience of the temporal history. It neatly and smoothly dovetails into the total framework of reality.

One practical consequence of the recognition given to the historical process by Rāmānuja is that human activities are rendered meaningful and important as never before. Art and literature, ethics and religion, service and sacrifice, love and charity become at once invested with everlasting significance and substance. All that glorifies a creation is good. Civilization is the unfoldment of God's own will and purpose. Man's responsibility to others and to himself, his total concern and commitment to the progress of mankind and in building up a brave new world become pronounced and clear. It is not any more a drama full of sorrow and fury, signifying nothing. Life is rather a serious undertaking and noble trust wherein destinies are decided even by the slightest twists and turns of human behaviour.

### III

Rāmānuja's conception of the soul is yet another instance of this profound sense of harmony and unique sculpture of his logic to suit facts. The soul being an immaterial principle of consciousness, is nevertheless not mere consciousness, pure and simple, but consciousness only as a power of the knower. The soul is always a knowing agent and his consciousness is always a light directed toward its objects and is never contentless. A blank and bare consciousness is unthinkable. This is so even in

deep sleep which is a condition of objectless experience, but even there the soul does not lapse from its character as a knower. There is no specific cognition of objects simply because there is no object.

This logic of an intentional consciousness is applied even to God. God is conscious power, not mere consciousness. The twin logical positions in Rāmānuja that there is nothing like a featureless indeterminacy and that consciousness is never devoid of specific contents are really the expressions of one and the same principle, that there is nothing indeterminate as such at any level.

Yet another insight that Rāmānuja had was the principle that nothing becomes unreal for the reason that it is an object of an awareness. It is not true, declares Rāmānuja, that consciousness, for instance, is always the subject and that it is never an object. But the plain fact of psychology is that very frequently consciousness, either of others or of oneself, is an object of observation and study. This is clearly evidenced by the phenomenon of self-consciousness and introspection. Reality and unreality are not determined by objectivity or subjectivity. Subject and object in knowledge enjoy an equal status both in ontology and epistemology. It is not rarely that the knower becomes the known in diverse contexts and perspectives. The consciousness of the released soul, that it has been released, is made possible and intelligible on Rāmānuja's account. Again here, Rāmānuja's logic includes consciousness at all levels, even that of God, in its function, and is equally applicable to all of them. Rāmānuja refuses to believe that there could be levels or tiers of reality, each intelligible only within its own compass and each following only its own logic.

Error, according to Rāmānuja, is logically impossible. All that is given in knowledge is real (*sarvaṁ vijñānājātaṁ*

*yathārtham*). We can speak of the inadequacy of a knowledge to produce a desired result, but never of its falsity. To talk of false knowledge is a contradiction in terms. In the experience of a mirage, there is disappointment, not because there is no water as one expected to find, but because there was not enough of water in it to quench one's thirst. Only the infinite knowledge of God is adequate to all the facts by this criterion. Thus, knowledge as a phenomenon does not face the spectre of error that opens up a world of delusions.

Lastly, Rāmānuja's sense of harmony pervades his account of the means to release also. While devotion will win the grace of God, it includes the training of the will and the intellect (*jñāna-karma-anugṛhitam bhakti-yogam*). Rāmānuja's list on self-discipline includes discrimination and desirelessness, contemplation and compassion, truthfulness and integrity, cheerfulness and hope.

A more exhaustive elucidation of the tremendous and pervasive sense of harmony and integration in Rāmānuja of all elements of existence can be attempted, but for space and time. But our selections are enough for the required instantiation. Such a powerful synthesis as a philosophical movement is found to be the most enduring of all that Rāmānuja taught.

---

## SAD-VIDYĀ

Śvetaketu returns from his preceptor, puffed up with pride of learning. His father (Uddālaka) tells him : “ You are puffed up (with pride). Did you at all ask about that *Ādeśa* (one by whom everything is ruled) ? Did you ask about that by hearing of which everything is heard of, by thinking of which everything is thought of, and by knowing which everything is known ? ”

The son does not understand what is in the father’s mind, namely, that all things have the same one cause. He thinks that when two things are different from each other, it is not possible to know one of them by knowing the other. So he asks, “ Of what nature, revered sire, is that *Ādeśa* ? ”

The father explains with the help of an example what is seen in the world of everyday life, namely, that the effect is none other than the cause. “ In the same way as, by knowing a single lump of mud, my dear, all things made of mud would become known..... they are all real only as mud.”

Thereafter the son who does not know how *Brahman* is the sole cause of the whole world, says, “ Revered sir, kindly explain this to me.” In order to show that *Brahman* who is omniscient and omnipotent alone is the cause of all, he (the father) says : “ This (the world) was at first (before creation), my dear, only *Sat* (the truth), only one without a second.”

The Supreme *Brahman* Himself who is referred to in the word *Sat*, who is omniscient and omnipotent and whose purpose is ever realised, willed to become the world with all its diverse and countless beings, sentient and non-sentient (saying) : “ I will become the many and for that purpose be born as the many.” Though He has all the objects that may be desired, (He willed so) for (His) sport.

— Śrī Rāmānuja on *Sadvidyā* in  
*Vedārtha Saṁgraha*.

# Rāmanuja As A Critic

DR. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN, M.A., PH.D., D.LITT., *Madras*.

Examination of other points of view is as necessary as exposition of one's own point of view. A philosopher cannot be content with the bare exposition of his standpoint. He must not only be familiar with the views of others but must also be in a position to point out the shortcomings and defects, if any, in them. Further, it is also necessary for one to take note of the evaluation of one's position in the light of the objections raised by them. How does this help, one may ask, the philosophical activity? It is helpful in two ways. First, it makes philosophical study critical. One cannot and should not take for granted that one's position is final. Secondly, it contributes to the development of philosophical literature. There is the need to reply to the objections, reconsider the position in the light of the rejoinders, and restate one's position; and this will necessitate the writing of works which are both expository and critical.

Rāmanuja is at his best not only when he elucidates the Viśiṣṭādvaita position, but also when he examines and criticizes the views of others. I propose to consider in this paper the manner in which Rāmanuja in his *Sribhāṣya* criticizes the Advaita doctrine of *avidyā*.

The concept of *avidyā* plays an important role in the metaphysics, epistemology and ethical discipline of Advaita. Let us first start with the metaphysical problems in Advaita.

The distinction between Nirguṇa-Brahman and Saguṇa-Brahman presupposes the concept of *avidyā*. Further, according to Advaita, just as the difference between Brahman and the jīva is the work of *avidyā*, even so the pluralistic universe is a product of *avidyā*. It means that the Advaitin makes use of the concept of *avidyā* in the explanation of the metaphysical problems connected with Brahman, jīva, and the world. Empirical knowledge as a whole, the Advaitin holds, is conditioned by, and therefore presupposes, *avidyā*; and so the entire epistemology including *śruti* which is *apauruṣeya* and which is *pramāṇa* through which knowledge of Brahman is to be obtained, is consigned to the sphere of *avidyā* by the Advaitin. Rāmānuja sums up the epistemological position of Advaita as follows: "The teacher who imparts knowledge is just a phenomenal appearance. The scripture is also unreal. All this is known from the scripture itself which is unreal." The ethical discipline which has been chalked out in Advaita is such that it is intended to pave the way for the origination of the saving knowledge from *śruti* texts. *Avidyā* is the root cause of bondage, and the Advaitin claims that it can be removed by knowledge, and *knowledge alone*.

The Advaita doctrine of *avidyā* is not acceptable to Rāmānuja. Considering that *avidyā* plays an important role in the philosophy of Advaita, Rāmānuja finds it necessary to examine this concept carefully and formulate his objections against it. This is what engages his attention in the celebrated *mahāsiddhānta* of the *Śrībhāṣya*, I, i, 1. He raises seven major objections, popularly referred to as *saptavidha-anupapatti*, against the Advaita doctrine of *avidyā*. The statement of his objections which are basic is the *locus classicus*. It deserves to be studied and understood carefully both by the Viśiṣṭādvaitin and the Advaitin. Unless one is familiar with the Advaita position, it will be difficult to follow the details of Rāmānuja's

arguments. Also, it is not easy in some places to follow his arguments. Apart from the difficulty in comprehending the long compounds which Rāmānuja is fond of using, the analysis which he works out through several alternatives for the purpose of criticising the opponent's view cannot be easily understood. Consider, for example, the three alternatives which Rāmānuja introduces almost at the commencement of the third objection called *svarūpānupapatti* for the purpose of the analysis of a point of view which is itself one of the two alternatives. The sentence begins with “*nāpi aparamārthaḥ, tatha sati hi.....*” One has to read and re-read passages of this type in Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya* with the help of a commentary. The objections raised by modern scholars against the Advaita doctrine of *avidyā* pale into insignificance when compared with those raised by Rāmānuja. For one thing, the objections of the modern critics are very often superficial without touching the roots of the problem. Secondly, one gets the impression that these objections have been raised without understanding the position of Advaita. It will, indeed, be beneficial to a modern critic of Advaita to acquaint himself with the manner in which the objections are raised as well as the substance of the objections by Rāmānuja against the pivotal doctrine of *avidyā* of the Advaita school. Rāmānuja's criticism of the Advaita doctrine of *avidyā* is important for another reason also. Some of the objections raised by him have already been anticipated by Yāmuna; still they are important inasmuch as they amplify and supplement the earlier objections. Further, it will be easier to follow the objections raised by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins of the post-Rāmānuja period like Vedāntadeśika if one is fully acquainted with the *saptavidha-anupapatti* of Rāmānuja.

According to Advaita, Brahman or the Self is the only reality. Since the Advaitin accounts for the appearance of the pluralistic universe by means of *avidyā*, it is necessary for him



to explain the locus (*āśraya*) of *avidyā*, i.e., the place from which *avidyā* functions. Rāmānuja's contention is that it is impossible for the Advaitin to explain the locus of *avidyā* in the context of (i) his basic metaphysical position and (ii) his explanation of the nature of Brahman-Ātman. This objection is known as *āśrayānupapatti*. We can now go into the details of Rāmānuja's first objection.

*Avidyā* which is admitted to be a positive entity and which is credited with the power of suppressing the truth and projecting the false universe cannot hang in the mid-air and do its function. It must have a base, a locus from where it can function. So Rāmānuja raises the basic question : what is the locus of *avidyā* ? The Advaitins answer this question in two ways. According to the *Bhāmatī* school, the *jīva* is the locus of *avidyā* ; but according to the *Vivaraṇa* school, it is Brahman-Ātman that is the locus of *avidyā*. Rāmānuja considers and rejects both the answers as neither of them is satisfactory. Though Rāmānuja here follows the lead given by Yāmuna, he throws new light on the issue under consideration by his elucidation.

The answer to the question given by the *Bhāmatī* school does not engage the attention of Rāmānuja for long. He summarily rejects it by devoting just a sentence to it in this context. He says that, since the *jīva* itself exists due to the work of *avidyā*, the former cannot be the locus of *avidyā*. In other words, the explanation that the *jīva* is the locus of *avidyā* involves the fallacy of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśraya*), for *avidyā* is dependent on the *jīva*, and the *jīva* on *avidyā*. The Advaitin has to prove either the *jīva* or *avidyā* independently of the other. Since he is not able to explain the *jīva* without recourse to *avidyā*, and *avidyā* without presupposing the *jīva*, the Advaita explanation, according to Rāmānuja, is fallacious and has,

therefore, to be rejected. It is necessary to bear in mind the ontological status of the jīva according to the Advaitin to see the force of Rāmānuja's attack. The jīva as such is a fictitious entity whose appearance is due to *avidyā*; and so it makes no sense to say that the very jīva is the locus of *avidyā*.

According to Rāmānuja, the *Vivaraṇa* explanation that Brahman is the locus of *avidyā* fares no better. The main objection of Rāmānuja here is that Brahman which, according to the Advaitin, is of the nature of self-luminous knowledge (*svayaṁ-prakāśa-jñānarūpa*) and *avidyā* which is its opposite are mutually exclusive and that Brahman, therefore, cannot be the locus of *avidyā*. Making a distinction between *ṛtti-jñāna* and *svarūpa-jñāna* the Advaitin says that, while the former is opposed to *avidyā*, the latter is not. This distinction, Rāmānuja argues, is untenable. The *ṛtti-jñāna* or *viśaya-jñāna* is the knowledge of Brahman. It is "knowledge that Brahman is of the nature of knowledge" (*jñānasvarūpaṁ brahma iti jñānam*). Since both *ṛtti-jñāna* and *svarūpa-jñāna* are knowledge, what holds good for the one must also hold good for the other. It means, Rāmānuja contends, that if *ṛtti-jñāna* is opposed to *avidyā*, then *svarūpa-jñāna* must also be opposed to it.

There is yet another difficulty. When the Advaitin speaks about "knowledge that Brahman is of the nature of knowledge", it is a case of knowledge of Brahman, i.e., knowledge whose content is Brahman. This is inconsistent with the Advaita view that Brahman which is knowledge is not an object of another knowledge. So it is wrong on the part of the Advaitin to speak of knowledge of Brahman.

It may be noted, Rāmānuja argues, that the case of Brahman is entirely different from that of an insentient object like a shell. Consider the case of a shell which is mistaken for silver. The shell by itself cannot remove the error that has

taken place here by revealing its nature because it is insentient (*jaḍa*). There is, therefore, the need of knowledge for comprehending the shell in its real nature and thereby removing the error that has taken place. But Brahman is of the nature of knowledge. Being self-luminous, it can, without the aid of another knowledge, remove *avidyā* by revealing its nature. If so, where is the need, asks Rāmānuja, for “another knowledge” which is credited with the work of destroying *avidyā* ?

What is the content of this “another knowledge” referred to earlier as *vṛtti-jñāna* or *viśaya-jñāna*? Brahman, we have already pointed out, cannot be the content of this knowledge. The Advaitin may argue that this other knowledge is knowledge of the world, i.e., knowledge that the world is *mithyā* (*prapañca-mithyātva-viśaya-jñānam*). Rāmānuja points out that this argument is not helpful to the Advaitin. Though this knowledge of the world removes our ignorance of it, it cannot remove our ignorance of Brahman, for it does not relate to Brahman but only to the world. So in spite of this knowledge of the world, ignorance of Brahman still persists, and the Advaitin has to show how it can be removed. If Brahman by its very nature is non-dual and if it can on its own reveal its non-duality, there is scope neither for the perception of duality nor for its sublation. Rāmānuja, therefore, concludes that Brahman which is *jñāna-svarūpa* cannot be the locus of *avidyā*.

The second major objection which Rāmānuja raises is called *tirodhāna-anupapatti*. According to Advaita, *avidyā* has two powers, the power of concealment (*āvaraṇa* or *tirodhāna śakti*) and the power of projection (*vikṣepa-śakti*). Brahman, the Advaitin says, is of the nature of homogeneous knowledge (*prakāśaika-svarūpam*), and *avidyā* by its power conceals or hides it. Rāmānuja asks: what does this concealment of knowledge mean? There are two possible answers to this

question. It may mean either the obstruction of the origination of knowledge (*prakāśa-utpatti-pratibandha*) or the destruction of the knowledge that exists (*vidyamānasya vināśa*). The first alternative is not acceptable to the Advaitin. Since knowledge which is Brahman is eternal, it has, according to the Advaitin, no origination, and so the question of obstructing the origination of knowledge does not arise. The Advaitin is, therefore, left with the second alternative. He must admit that concealment of knowledge is destruction of knowledge (*prakāśatirodhānaṁ prakāśanāśa eva*). It amounts to the destruction of Brahman whose essential nature is knowledge. This is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Advaita view that *avidyā* has the power of concealment through which the nature of Brahman gets hidden.

The third objection called *svarūpa-anupapatti* brings out the difficulty in explaining the ontological status of *avidyā*. What is the ontological status of *avidyā* which is said to be a defect (*doṣa*) existing in Brahman? Rāmānuja places the Advaitin in a predicament by compelling him to answer this question in terms of one of the two alternatives both of which are undesirable. The Advaitin must say that *avidyā* is ontologically real (*paramārtha*) or unreal (*aparamārtha*); and the alternatives here are both collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The Advaitin, Rāmānuja points out, does not hold *avidyā* to be real as it will be detrimental to his basic thesis of non-dualism. He must, therefore say that it is unreal. This way of answering the question leads to several difficulties. If it is unreal, what is it that has made it unreal? Is it another defect? If so, one may ask, how did the second defect come about? Again, what is the cause of the defect of the defect? This line of reasoning which involves infinite regress, does not give a satisfactory solution to the question under consideration.

Rāmānuja examines the unreality of *avidyā* in an entirely different way. If *avidyā* is unreal, in what form, asks Rāmānuja. Is it in the form of a knowing subject, or an object of knowledge, or knowledge itself (*draṣṭṛtvena vā*, *dṛśyatvena vā*, *dṛśitvena vā*)? Let us first take the third alternative. Knowledge which is homogeneous and infinite does not, according to the Advaitin, admit of any distinction such as real and unreal. There is yet another difficulty. Brahman is the only reality admitted by the Advaitin. If knowledge which is Brahman is unreal, then the Advaitin cannot speak of any reality whatsoever; and this will amount to accepting the standpoint of the Mādhyaṃika.

Nor can the Advaitin explain the unreality of *avidyā* in terms of the remaining two alternatives. According to the Advaitin, the knowing subject, the object of knowledge and the knowledge as determined by these two are unreal; and if they are unreal, they require another defect to account for them; and that defect in its turn would require another defect, and so on *ad infinitum*. The Advaitin, therefore, cannot run away from this ghost of infinite regress so long as he holds that the defect of *avidyā* is unreal.

If the Advaitin, in order to overcome the above difficulty, would hold that Brahman itself which is real is the basic defect, then there is, Rāmānuja remarks, no need for the Advaitin to postulate *avidyā* in addition to Brahman, for he can account for the appearance of the world through Brahman itself without recourse to *avidyā*. The Advaitin has to face another difficulty which is more dangerous. Brahman is eternal; and if Brahman itself is the basic defect, then the latter is also eternal. Rāmānuja says that such a position, if held for the sake of argument by the Advaitin, will rule out the possibility of attaining liberation. He concludes his argument by saying

that, unless the Advaitin accepts a real defect (*pāramārthika-doṣa*) other than Brahman, he cannot account for the appearance of the pluralistic universe; and if the Advaitin is prepared to accept it, it will mean the abandonment of his thesis of non-dualism.

When it is shown that the ontological status of *avidyā* must be either real or unreal and that neither alternative is free from difficulty, the Advaitin argues that there is a third alternative open to him. He says that *avidyā* is *anirvacanīyā*. Rāmānuja's fourth objection called *anirvacanīyatva-anupapatti* is a direct attack on this explanation of the Advaitin which totally ignores the law of excluded middle.

The Advaitin says that *avidyā* is not real (*sat*) because it is sublated. It is not unreal (*asat*) either, because it is experienced. Ontologically it is something different from both real and unreal (*sadasadvilakṣaṇa*). The term "*anirvacanīya*" means, according to the Advaitin, what is indeterminable as real or as unreal. It is used in the sense of *sadasadvilakṣaṇa*. This explanation of the ontological status of *avidyā* is not acceptable to Rāmānuja. It is well-known that we determine the nature of an object on the basis of our cognition. "As the cognition, so the object" is the principle we follow. If I say that a certain object is such-and-such, it is on the basis of the cognition I have. If so, Rāmānuja asks, is there any justification for the admission of an entity which is said to be neither real nor unreal? The answer is "no". Every cognition (*pratīti*) that we have presents itself in the form of *sat* or *asat*. For example, when I have "table-cognition", the object revealed by my cognition is "table". In the same way, when there is the cognition in the form of *sat*, the object known is *sat*; and when there is the cognition in the form of *asat*, the object known is *asat*. When all our cognitions are restricted to the double form of *sat* and *asat*, it is untenable to

speak of an object which is different from both *sat* and *asat* as what is revealed by our cognition. If the 'principle of "As the cognition, so the object" is not accepted, then anything can be the content of any cognition. When I have "table-cognition", "table" alone is the content of my cognition, and not chair or any other object. If chair or any other object can be the content of "table-cognition", we can never be guided by our cognitions in our day-to-day life, and our entire business of life will come to a stand-still. Since the Advaita explanation of the ontological status of *avidyā* in terms *sadasadvilakṣaṇa* goes contrary to the evidence of our cognition, it has to be rejected. Rāmānuja has a dig at the Advaitin. He says that *avidyā* is, indeed, *anirvacanīya*, i.e., inexplicable, because there is no cognition in support of it (*pramāṇa-śūnyatvena anirvacanīyataiva syāt*).

According to Advaita, *avidyā* should not be viewed negatively as *jñānaprāgabhāva*, i.e., antecedent non-existence of knowledge. It is something positive (*bhāvarūpa*). A negative entity cannot be the cause of anything. *Avidyā* not only conceals the real nature of Brahman, but projects the false universe as well. It is the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the pluralistic universe which we experience. Inasmuch as it does the work of concealment (*āvaraṇa*) and projection (*vikṣepa*), it must be positive.

The Advaitin tries to establish the positive nature of *avidyā* by means of perception and inference. All of us, the Advaitin says, have direct perceptual experience of *avidyā*. For example, we say: "I am ignorant"; "I don't know myself". Just as when I say, "I am happy," I have the direct experience of happiness, even so when I say, "I am ignorant," (*aham ajñāḥ*) I have the direct experience of *avidyā*. It is wrong to treat this as *jñānābhāva*. It is the general principle that knowledge of *abhāva* requires the prior knowledge of *pratiyogin* and *dharmin*.

In the case of *jñānābhāva*, *jñāna* or knowledge is the *pratiyogin*; and the Self is the *dharmin*. If there is apprehension of *jñāna* as the *pratiyogin* and the Self as *dharmin*, there cannot be *jñānābhāva*. If there is no such apprehension, one cannot speak about *jñānābhāva* at all. Such a difficulty, the Advaitin argues, will not arise if *avidyā* is treated as something positive.

By means of inference also it can be shown that *avidyā* is positive. The Advaitin gives the following inference :

*Pramāṇa-jñāna* is preceded by something else, which is different from its *prāgabhāva*, which hides the object of knowledge, which is terminated by knowledge, and which exists in the same place as knowledge.

Because knowledge possesses the property of illumining things not illumined before.

Just as the light of a lamp which comes out first when lit in the dark illumines things.

It may be noted, the Advaitin says, that darkness (*tamas*) is not just absence of light ; but it is something positive. In the same way, *avidyā* is also something positive.

Rāmānuja's fifth objection called *pramāṇa-anupapatti* is intended to show that neither perception nor inference lends support to the Advaita view that *avidyā* is *bhāvarūpa*.

Rāmānuja first of all shows that the difficulty pointed out by the Advaitin with regard to interpreting *avidyā* as *jñāna-prāgabhāva* is present even if *avidyā* is explained as *bhāvarūpa*. Rāmānuja asks : is Brahman-Ātman which is the locus as well as the content of *avidyā* (viewed as a positive entity) known or not known? If it is known, there is no room for *avidyā*, for the knowledge of Brahman-Ātman puts an end to *avidyā*. If it is not known, how can there be apprehension of *avidyā*, for



the apprehension of *avidyā* requires the knowledge of the locus and the object of *avidyā*. Just as *avidyā* in the negative sense of "absence of knowledge" is not self-explanatory, even so *avidyā* in the positive sense is not self-explanatory. This point will be clear if we consider the different ways in which we can understand the meaning of *ajñāna*. The term "*ajñāna*", Rāmānuja says, can be understood in three ways. It may mean "absence of knowledge" (*jñānābhāva*), or "what is other than knowledge" (*tadanyaḥ*) or "what is opposed to knowledge" (*tadvirodhi*). In whatever way we construe the meaning, the term "*ajñāna*" presupposes "knowledge". It means that just as "*ajñāna*" in the sense of *jñānābhāva* presupposes something else, even so "*ajñāna*" viewed as a positive entity presupposes something else. The point which Rāmānuja wants to drive home is that the Advaitin should not make much fuss about the difficulty in the negative interpretation of *avidyā*. So Rāmānuja concludes that statements such as "I am ignorant", "I don't know myself", point to the absence of knowledge experienced by us.

Let us now consider the inference given by the Advaitin to prove that *avidyā* is positive. Rāmānuja says that the inference formulated by the Advaitin commits the fallacy of *viruddha* or contradictory middle. The *hetu* given in the argument is a contradictory one because it proves what is not desired to be proved, but something else. The Advaitin holds that there is only one *ajñāna* which conceals Brahman-Ātman and which has, therefore, Brahman-Ātman as its content; and this *ajñāna* which he intends to prove may be called *brahma-viṣayaka-ajñāna*. But what he proves through the *hetu* is not this *ajñāna*, but a different *ajñāna*. Let us say: we are ignorant of *ajñāna* as something positive; and this ignorance whose content is *ajñāna* is now proved in this inference. So what is proved is *ajñāna-viṣayaka-ajñāna* which is different from *brahma-viṣayaka-ajñāna*.

So Rāmānuja says that the *hetu* is contradictory because, without proving what is desired to be proved, it proves some other *ajñāna*. The *hetu* is also *anaikāntika* because it is not uniformly related to the *sādhya*. These fallacies apart, there is another difficulty. What will happen when *ajñāna* is proved through inference? The moment there is *pramāṇa-jñāna* obtained through inference, there will not be *ajñāna*, for *pramāṇa-jñāna* will destroy *ajñāna*; if so, Rāmānuja asks, how can the Self be the witness of *ajñāna*? Further, the example cited by the Advaitin in the inferential argument is defective. Rāmānuja says that the example, i.e., the light of a lamp, has no proving power (*sādhana-vikala*). It is well-known that knowledge alone has the power of illumination, i.e., it alone can reveal things. The light of a lamp does not by itself have the power of revealing things. It is no doubt useful, like a sense organ, for knowing things. Nevertheless, its role, like that of a sense organ, is an auxiliary one. Since knowledge alone reveals things not known before, the example of the light of a lamp adduced by the Advaitin is unsound. Therefore the Advaitin has not proved by means of inference that *avidyā* is a positive entity.

In the sixth objection called *nivartaka-anupapatti*, Rāmānuja shows that the Advaita explanation of the removability of *avidyā* is untenable. According to Advaita, *avidyā*, though beginningless (*anādi*), has an end. What is it that removes *avidyā*? Advaita holds the view that Brahman which is the only reality is *nirviśeṣa*, i.e., it is free from all distinctions. Not knowing Brahman which is one and non-dual, one perceives plurality, which is ignorance. It is well-known that knowledge is the antidote to ignorance. What is required for the removal of *avidyā* is the knowledge of Brahman as *nirviśeṣa*. The Advaitin claims that *śruti* teaches the cessation of *avidyā* as taking place only from the knowledge of Brahman devoid of all difference.

The argument of the Advaitin proceeds on the assumption that Brahman is *nirviśeṣa*. The truth is that Brahman is not *nirviśeṣa*, for there is no *pramāṇa* in support of the Advaita claim. Rāmānuja points out that perception, inference, and verbal testimony prove only a differentiated entity, and not one which is devoid of all difference. Even in *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* the object, Rāmānuja maintains, is perceived as such-and-such, i.e., as a differentiated entity. He shows that there is no justification for the distinction that the object of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is an undifferentiated one whereas that of *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is a differentiated one. In both, we perceive only a differentiated object. However, this does not mean that there is no distinction between the two kinds of perception according to Rāmānuja. While the knowledge of the class feature is not possible at the stage of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, it is possible, says Rāmānuja, in the other variety. If the object of perception is a differentiated one, the object known through inference is bound to be a differentiated one. Let us consider the case of *śabda*. A sentence consists of a group of words ; and a word is a combination of a radical element (*prakṛti*) and a suffix (*pratyaya*). Since the meaning of *prakṛti* and *pratyaya* are different, a word, says Rāmānuja, conveys, only a differentiated sense (*viśiṣṭārtha*). If so, a sentence which is an aggregate of words must convey *a fortiori* a differentiated sense. And this is true of both scriptural and secular sentences.

The above argument that neither perception nor inference nor verbal testimony proves the existence of an object free from distinctions is a general one. Rāmānuja cites several scriptural texts to show that they purport to teach that Brahman is *saviśeṣa*. Consider the *Śvetāśvatara* text, III. 8, which says : "I know the Supreme Person of sun-like colour beyond darkness. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death. There is no other path for going there." According to Rāmānuja, scriptural texts like this clearly show that Brahman is *saviśeṣa*. Negative texts which say that Brahman is *nirguṇa*

convey the sense that Brahman is free from the qualities of *prakṛti* and not that it is devoid of all qualities. Again, the major text, “*tat tvam asi*,” does not convey the sense of the oneness of a non-differentiated entity. The grammatical co-ordination (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) between the two words “*tat*” and “*tvam*” is intended to convey the sense of one entity qualified by two aspects (*prakāradvayaviśiṣṭa-ekavastu*). This text, says Rāmānuja, denotes Brahman which is not only the cause of the world but which has also the individual souls as its body (*jīvaśarīra-jaṭatkāraṇa-brahman*). So all the scriptural texts teach that Brahman is *saviśeṣa*. Since Brahman as taught by scripture is *saviśeṣa*, it is wrong to say that *avidyā* can be removed by getting the knowledge of Brahman as *nirviśeṣa*.

Is the Advaita explanation of the attainment of *mukti* tenable? Rāmānuja’s answer is “no”. The last major objection called *nivṛtṭyanupapatti* brings out the difficulties in the Advaita explanation of the attainment of *mukti*.

The Advaitin develops his theory on the false assumption that bondage is unreal, something false (*mithyā*). He says that *avidyā* is the cause of bondage. Since *avidyā* is *mithyā*, bondage cannot be but *mithyā*. So the Advaitin says that all that is required for the removal of bondage is knowledge of Brahman-Ātman. When this saving knowledge arises, *avidyā* is destroyed ; and with the destruction of *avidyā* bondage also gets removed. The entire argument of the Advaitin, Rāmānuja argues, is fallacious. Bondage which consists in the experience of pleasure and pain through the connection of the self with bodies of various kinds cannot be dismissed as unreal. On the contrary, it is real (*paramārtha*). It cannot, therefore, be removed by knowledge as maintained by the Advaitin. The real position is that the destruction of bondage will be possible only through the grace of the Lord to be obtained through *bhakti* or *upāsana*.

Secondly, the solution which the Advaitin suggests is like a remedy which instead of curing the disease aggravates it. The Advaitin says that the knowledge of the oneness of reality will remove bondage. This is nothing but a pious wish. Rāmānuja points out that the alleged knowledge of the oneness of reality (*aikya-jñāna*) is itself false, because it is not true to the nature of reality. When the supreme reality is *saviśeṣa*, to think of it as *nirviśeṣa* is false. When there cannot be any identity between *jīva* and Brahman, to think of such identity is false. Such a knowledge which is false, Rāmānuja declares, will only strengthen the knot of bondage without unloosening it.

There is yet another difficulty. What is the ontological status of the "bondage-terminating" knowledge (*nivartaka-jñāna*)? Since everything other than Brahman is *mithyā*, the Advaitin maintains that this saving knowledge also is *mithyā*. Here arises the difficulty. If it is *mithyā*, it must also be removed. And so we have to search for another knowledge for the purpose of removing this "bondage-terminating" knowledge. Once again, we will raise the same question about the ontological status of this another knowledge. The Advaitin must say that it is also *mithyā*. Consequently, we have to find out another knowledge for the purpose of removing it. It will be seen that this way of solving the difficulty involves the fallacy of infinite regress (*anavasthā*). We have, therefore, to tackle the problem of the removal of bondage in an entirely different way, and not in the way suggested by the Advaitin.

It is no argument to say that this "bondage-terminating" knowledge, after destroying all kinds of duality, disappears of its own accord being momentary. This argument, Rāmānuja says, is not convincing. Since its nature, its origination and its disappearance are fictitious (*kālpānīka*), caused by *avidyā*, it is only proper to find out some other agency capable of destroying *avidyā*. The Advaitin

cannot solve the difficulty about the removal of "terminating knowledge" by invoking the nature of Brahman. Brahman which is of the nature of self-luminous knowledge is ever-existent. If so, Rāmānuja asks, how can a knowledge which is false originate at all when Brahman-knowledge which is real is ever-present?

The Advaita explanation is open to criticism from another point of view. Rāmānuja asks the question: who has this "bondage-terminating" knowledge which negates everything other than Brahman? Does any one other than Brahman, e.g., the jīva, possess this knowledge? Or does Brahman itself possess this knowledge? Rāmānuja observes that the first alternative is not possible. The Advaitin claims that everything other than Brahman is false. So the one who has this knowledge, being different from Brahman, is fictitious or false, and hence to be negated. What is to be negated by the "terminating knowledge" cannot at the same time be the subject of that knowledge (*nivartakajñāna-karmatvāt taikartṛtva-anupapatteḥ*). Further, the one who has this knowledge will not wish for one's own destruction by means of the knowledge of which he is the subject. The second alternative fares no better. If it be said that Brahman itself is the knower, i.e., one who has this "bondage-terminating" knowledge, Rāmānuja suggests two possibilities for consideration in this connection. Is it the very nature (*svarūpa*) of Brahman to be the knower? Or is it something fictitious wrongly superimposed on Brahman (*adhyasta*)? The second possibility is not helpful to the Advaitin. While the "terminating knowledge" negates everything, it cannot negate the knower or the subject of this knowledge. It means that the knower of this knowledge which is a case of *adhyāsa* and *avidyā* which is the cause of *adhyāsa* remain untouched by the "terminating knowledge". If it be said that they can be removed by another terminating knowledge (*nivartaka-jñānāntaram*), it will lead to infinite regress. Nor

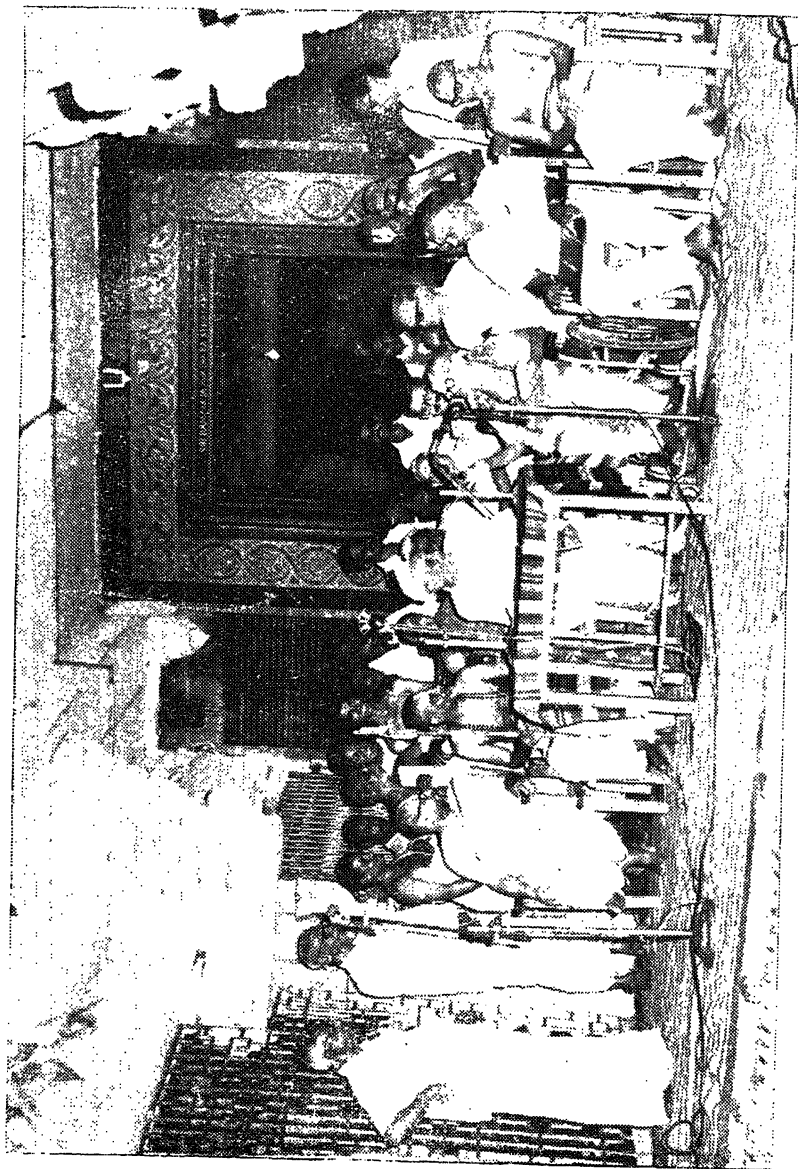
can the Advaitin accept the second possibility. The Advaitin holds the view that Brahman by its very nature is knowledge and not the knower. So Rāmānuja's criticism is that the question, 'who has the "bondage-terminating" knowledge?', cannot be satisfactorily answered by the Advaitin.

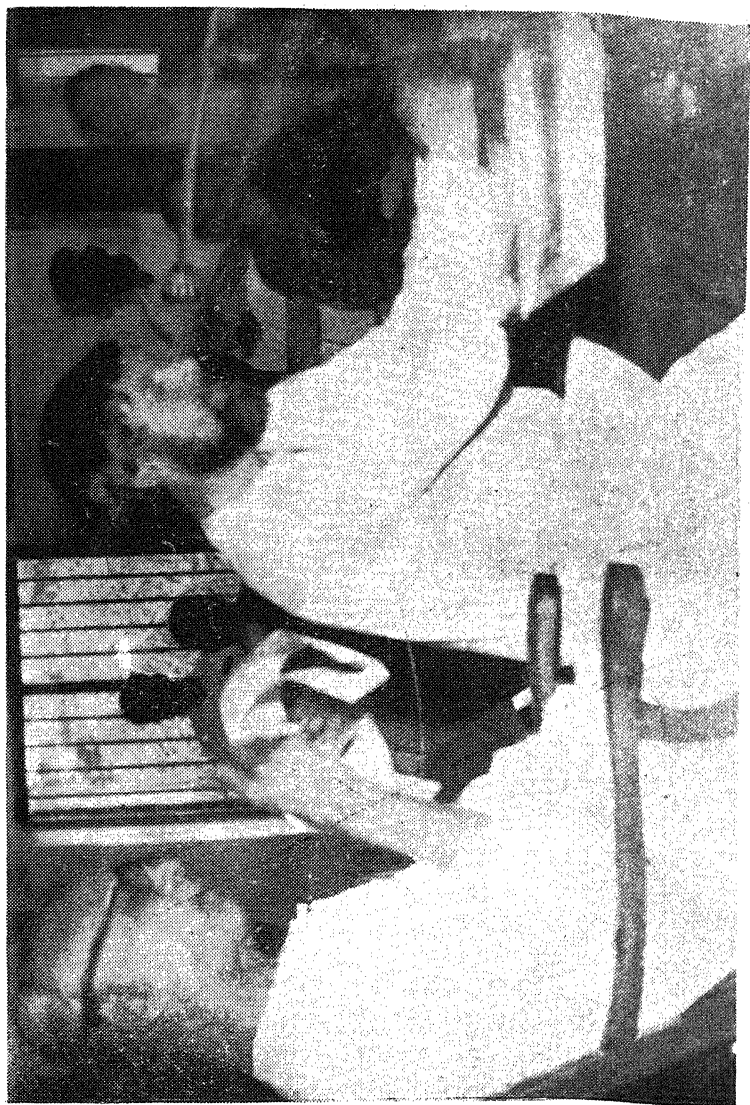
The different objections which Rāmānuja has raised against the Advaita doctrine of *avidyā* must be considered in the context of the basic thesis of Advaita. The Advaitin says that Brahman-Ātman is knowledge by its very nature and that it is one and non-dual. If so, wherefrom does *avidyā* operate? How can it conceal the nature of Brahman which is ever-existent and ever-shining? How can its nature be explained? How can it be credited with a peculiar ontological status different from the real and the unreal? How can it be said to be something positive? How can it be removed? What is it that removes it? According to Rāmānuja, the Advaitin has no satisfactory answer to all these questions with reference to *avidyā*. The issue here is not whether they can be answered or not. What is important for a student of philosophy is the question itself — the manner in which the question is raised and the substance of the question. The role of a critic is as important as the role of an expounder of a system. Rāmānuja plays both the roles with great distinction drawing his inspiration from *ubhaya-vedānta*. A critic who indulges in criticism just for the sake of criticism is not helpful to anyone. But a critic who helps others to develop an insight into the problem is, indeed, constructive. Rāmānuja is a constructive critic. He takes us to the root of the problem which is reviewed and examined, and helps us to look at it in the larger context of the system as a whole. A student of Advaita will gain an insight into his own system by a careful study of Rāmānuja's objections against Advaita as a whole.

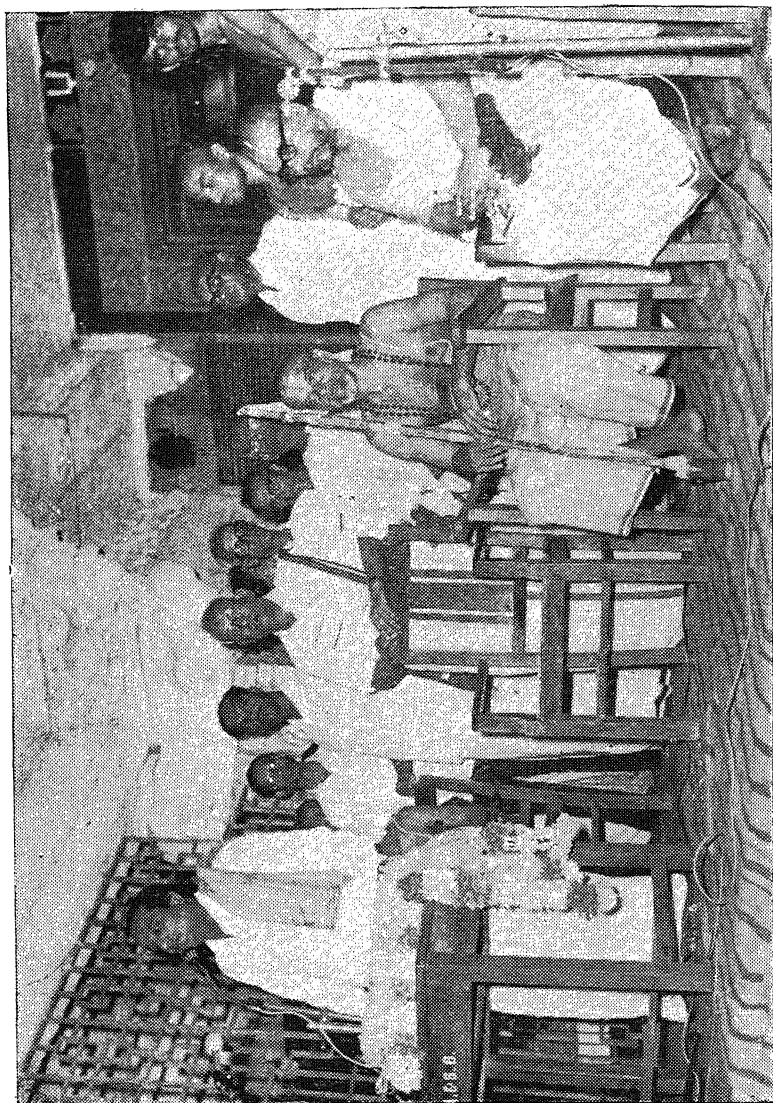
---











## APPENDIX

---

# All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja at Śrīperumbūdūr

### A REPORT

The first All-India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja and his Social Philosophy met at Śrīperumbūdūr (40 km. from Madras), the birth-place of Śrī Rāmānuja, on the 21st and 22nd July 1979 under the auspices of Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre (Regd.) Madras and the Śrīperumbūdūr Sanskrit College.

His Excellency Śrī Prabhudās Patwāri, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, inaugurated the Seminar at the *Avatāra Maṇṭapa* opposite the temple. He was received with *pūrṇakumbha* and temple honours, at the Āñjaneya shrine near the temple, by H. H. Śrī Yatirāja Jiyar Swāmi who is the religious trustee of the temple, Śrī Tirukkallam Narasimha Rāghavāchārya Swāmy who is the President of Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, Śrī Nammālwar Chetty of the Sanskrit College Committee and others.

Śrī Y. G. Doraisāmy, Vice-president of the Seminar Committee, welcomed the Governor. He referred to the founding of the Centre by H. H. Śrī Yadugiri Yatirāja Jiyar Swāmi of Melkote in order to propagate Śrī Rāmānuja's teachings to the modern world and pointed out the appropriateness of the Seminar, the first of its kind, taking place at Śrīperumbūdūr.

H. E. the Governor drew attention to Śrī Rāmānuja's concern for the welfare of all, as evidenced by the reason for his taking to *sannyāsa*, and by his broadcasting a teaching given to him by his *guru* under the seal of secrecy, and risking hell for the redemption of the world. The striking similarity between the ideals of Śrī Rāmānuja and Śrī Narsi Mehta of Gujarat (the author of the famous *bhajan* song "Vaiṣṇava Janato") was also mentioned.

Śrī Prativādi-bhayaṅkara Aṇṇaṅgarāchārya Swāmi of Kāñcīpuram spoke in Sanskrit and Tamil on the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*, the leading concept of Śrī Rāmānuja.

At the evening session of the seminar on the 21st Prof. M. R. Sampatkumāran, Editor, *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇi*, read a paper “Śrī Rāmānuja as a Social Emancipator.” He drew attention to the revolution brought about by Śrī Rāmānuja by championing the liberal tradition in orthodoxy which allowed to all equal access to God, insisted on elimination of differences among the brotherhood of the devout and stressed social service as the fulfilment of devotion to God.

The paper “Śrī Rāmānuja in Tamil Literature” by Dr. Damodaran of Śrī Venkateśwara University, Tirupati described his portraiture in Amudanar’s *Nūṛṇṇādi*, Varavara Muni’s *Ārtiprabandha*, the recent poem of Śrī T. S. Rajagopala Iyengar and other works.

On 22nd Dr. E. J. Lott of United Theological College, Bangalore presented a paper on many aspects of the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* which sought to express the core of Śrī Rāmānuja’s vision of God. Dr. K. K. A. Venkatachari, Director, Ananthāchārya Indological Research Institute, Bombay, sought to trace the history of the concept of *ubhaya-vedānta* which placed the *Vedas* and the *Divya-prabandha* on an equal footing. Dr. K. V. Raman of the University of Madras drew attention to many interesting epigraphs referring to Śrī Rāmānuja at Toṇḍanūr, Tirupati, Srīraṅgam, Kāñcī and other places. Some of them were contemporaneous with Rāmānuja. The enduring elements in Śrī Rāmānuja’s philosophy were highlighted by Dr. P. K. Sundaram of the University of Madras who described Śrī Rāmānuja as the champion of an integrated Indian culture with all its aspects harmoniously coordinated.

In the afternoon, the duties of daily life as enjoined by Śrī Rāmānuja in his *Nitya* were discussed by Dr. R. N. Sampath of Presidency College, Madras. All activities are to be inspired by intense devotion to God. Prof. K. A. Manavalan of Vaiṣṇava College, Madras spoke about the deep influence exercised on Śrī Rāmānuja by the *Divya-prabandha*, as could be made out from a close examination of his Sanskrit works.

There was lively discussion on all the papers.

Prof. C. Jagannāthachariar presided and conducted the discussions.

A discourse on *Gītā-bhāṣya* by U. Ve. Vidwan Sri Tirukkallam Narasimharāghavāchārya, President of Sri Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, was delivered at the *Avatāra-maṅṭapa* in the evening. H. H. the Jiyar Swāmi also spoke.

Hon'ble Thiru R. Soundararājan, Minister of Health, Tamil Nadu, arrived in the evening. Welcoming him, Sri Narasimharāghavāchārya said that it would be readily agreed by all impartial people that the philosophy of Viśiṣṭadvaita as taught by Sri Rāmānuja was great in the respect that it opened the pathway to God to every individual without distinctions of caste, creed or sex and made it clear that the approach to God might be through *bhakti*, *prapatti* and *śaraṇāgati*. Sri Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre had been founded three years earlier with the objective of popularising these liberal teachings in the present-day context. The Centre was publishing a quarterly journal in English under the name 'Sri Rāmānuja Vāṇi'. Extending a welcome to the Hon. Minister, the President said that the Minister had been brought up in a true Sri-vaiṣṇava tradition and this was reflected in his words and deeds.

The Hon. Minister in his valedictory address said that he felt very small amidst the galaxy of erudite scholars assembled and that he would like more to be a listener than a speaker. However, he had come as the representative of the Government of Tamil Nadu to convey to the organisers of the Seminar the good wishes of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Hindu Religious Endowments.

Then he spoke on Rāmānuja's life and teachings and described him as great in whatever aspect he was viewed—as a leader, as a reformer, as a revolutionary, as a theologian, as a philosopher or as an *acāryā*. He gave up the life of a householder and became a *sannyāsin*, because he found his wife unable to keep pace with his own ideas on external orthodoxy and spiritual development. He respected every individual for the soul enshrined in him which he considered as a mode of *Brahman*.

Continuing, the Minister said that the most significant act in the life of Sri Rāmānuja was his breaking the age-long barrier of secrecy in imparting spiritual instruction which was

limited to a select few in every generation, and making it available to all, without difference in caste, creed or sex, who evinced earnest desire and eagerness. When reprimanded by his *ācārya* for breaking the tradition, Rāmānuja sought his pardon saying that one Rāmānuja going to hell did not matter, if the entire humanity could be saved by the *mantra*. Such was his compassion.

The Minister further said that while the present-day generations were taking credit for having thrown open Hindu temples to the untouchables, we should realise that a thousand years ago when social observance was rigorous, Rāmānuja permitted access to the temple of Nārāyaṇa at Melkote to the untouchables to whom he gave the name '*Tirukkulattār*'—the people of noble birth. Rāmānuja was indeed a great revolutionary.

The Minister commended the 'six sentences' which Rāmānuja obtained from Śrī Varadarāja of Kāñci through Tīrukkacchi Nambi. They were not meant for him alone, but for each and every one of us, common people. He then narrated several incidents from the life of Rāmānuja to highlight his greatness as a man, a philosopher and an *ācārya*.

A resolution was adopted requesting the Government of Tamil Nadu to name the Poonamallee High Road as '*Śrī Rāmānuja Neduñcālai*'.

With a vote of thanks proposed by Prof. K. A. Manavalan, the Seminar came to a close.

---

# Welcome Address

(By SRI Y. G. DORAISAMI, *Vice-President, Seminar Committee.*)

Your Holiness, Your Excellency, Respected Swamis, ladies and gentlemen,

I deem it a privilege to welcome this distinguished gathering to the All India Seminar on Sri Rāmaṇuja, the first of its kind. It is appropriate that it should be held at Śrīperumbūdūr where the illustrious Ācārya was born nearly a thousand years ago. The Seminar bears testimony to the fact that his teachings are still a living force. Just as they spread from here ten centuries ago to foster the welfare of the world, our humble efforts may hopefully start another wave of wholesome influence, as Sri Rāmaṇuja's passion for synthesis, his flair for harmonising discords, is badly needed today.

The Seminar is being conducted under the joint auspices of Sri Rāmaṇuja Vedānta Centre, Madras and the old and respected Sanskrit College, Śrīperumbūdūr. The Centre was started in 1976 at the instance of His late Holiness, Sri Yadugiri Yatirāja Nārāyaṇa Rāmaṇuja Jiyar Swami of Tirunārāyaṇapuram (Melkote) to encourage studies in Sri Rāmaṇuja's teachings and to present them in such a way as to appeal to the modern world. It is a registered society, and it has been running a quarterly magazine called "Sri Rāmaṇuja Vāṇi". A souvenir was brought out in May 1977 on the occasion of the 960th birth anniversary, and since then eight further issues have been published. I shall be requesting His Excellency the Governor of Tamil Nadu to release the latest issue of the quarterly. In this connection, may I remind His Excellency that he was kind enough to release the Souvenir in 1977? His good wishes and prayers must have helped the *Vāṇi* to survive the illness of infancy and to be a sturdy child of two today.

The organisers of the Seminar have wide-ranging ambitions. But the time available to participants and financial constraints have obliged them to limit its duration for two days. The papers to be read and discussed at the Seminar cover a broad spectrum and touch on almost all important aspects of



Śrī Rāmānuja's life and work. As we all know, he was not a closet philosopher but one who lived out what he taught, who laboured among the people to help them in their spiritual endeavour and who established institutions to carry on his work. Eminent scholars have been kind enough to accept our invitation and I take this opportunity to thank them for their kind cooperation.

We propose to publish the proceedings of the Seminar in due course. And they will show a cross-section of the contemporary thinking on the problems taken up. It is hoped that this will be the first of many Seminars and that it will inaugurate study, research and publication on a large scale. We have plans in mind, given due encouragement, to start a Reasearch Institute on Śrī Rāmānuja which will carry on this work regularly. May Śrīperumbūdūr again radiate after a thousand years Śrī Rāmānuja's creative teachings.

On this historic and memorable occasion, we wish to repeat to Your Excellency an appeal which we made in 1977 during the 960th anniversary of the birth of Śrī Rāmānuja. We request that Your Excellency may be pleased to suggest to the Government of Tamil Nadu, that Poonamallee High Road, commencing from Fort St. George be renamed as "Śrī Rāmānuja Neduncālai ". We shall be ever grateful to Your Excellency and to the Government of Tamil Nadu for this change.

Once again, I offer our cordial welcome to all of you. And I request His Excellency to inaugurate the Seminar and then release the latest issue of *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇi* by handing over a copy to Sri Subramaniam, I.A.S., Commissioner, Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments, Tamil Nadu.

*Śrimate Rāmānujāya Namaḥ !*

---

# Speech of Shri Prabhudas B. Patwari, Governor of Tamil Nadu

Sisters and Brothers,

I feel greatly honoured to be invited to associate myself with the inauguration of this All India Seminar on "Śrī Rāmānuja and his Social Philosophy". It is a rare blessing for us that we are honouring Śrī Rāmānuja here, at his very birth-place which, for Vaiṣṇavites, is one of the *puṇya-bhūmis* in Bhārat. It is in the fitness of things that several scholars are participating in this Seminar. The subject you have chosen for discussion, has great relevance to the present times.

To the South goes the credit of having given to the world eminent *Ācāryas* and saints, whose contributions to our religion are immeasurable. The advent of Rāmānuja was marked by considerable religious ferment. At that time, each religious sect among the people felt the need for formulating a creed of its own and placing itself in a regularly organised religious body, so as to be able to hold its own in the midst of the disintegrating influences that gained dominance in society.

We have had an unbroken succession of ardent Śaivite devotees and Vaiṣṇavite devotees, who are rightly worshipped as great saints by their respective followers. In addition, we have another group called *Ācāryas*, universal preceptors. Rāmānuja belongs to this distinguished line of *Ācāryas*, tracing his descent to his great-grandfather. Even while receiving instruction from his *Guru*, Rāmānuja displayed his extraordinary understanding of the scriptures, and could excel his teacher in certain interpretations. There were attempts on his life, and ultimately he succeeded in the mission entrusted to him by God. His fame spread far and wide, and his commentaries on our important scriptures have influenced the people a great deal.

As we all know, Vaiṣṇavism is a very old from of our religion. Rāmānuja declared *bhakti* to be the most suitable means to achieve purity, sinlessness and selflessness. *Bhakti* is the truest and the most unfailing means for the attainment of *mokṣa*. *Prema-bhakti*, we are assured by the *Bhāgavata*, is the easiest path for all of us. The simplest of the roads open to man to reach God is that of absolute unqualified self-surrender known as *prapatti*. This is accomplished not by mere learning or by mortification of the flesh, but by a radical alteration in one's attitude to life. The *Sāstra* speaks of the art of worshipping God with eight kinds of flowers. Each flower symbolises a virtue of the soul. Non-injury, self-restraint, compassion, forgiveness, peace, austerity, knowledge and truthfulness—these are the flowers. The key word in Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇava philosophy is service of God through the service of his devotees. Rāmānuja proclaimed and popularised such concepts among the people, and he was a pillar of strength to the *bhakti* movement.

Rāmānuja's social philosophy can be delineated clearly from his life and teachings. Rāmānuja was taught by his *Guru* the secret meaning of the *mantra*, on the clear understanding that it should be kept secret and not given out to anyone except a worthy disciple. He flagrantly transgressed the instructions of his teacher by going up to the top of the temple tower, inviting all the people and publicly teaching the *mantra* to them, irrespective of caste or creed. Eternal hell, said his teacher, was the punishment for such transgression. But Rāmānuja's answer was that he would gladly suffer hell himself, if he could be instrumental in helping millions of people to attain salvation. This incident is the hallmark of his social philosophy, and reveals his concern for the spiritual uplift of the masses. As a great scholar said of him, his life was one of courageous conviction, enduring sincerity and comprehensive humanity.

I would say that Rāmānuja was a pioneer in spearheading the temple-entry movement for Harijans. It was Rāmānuja who admitted Harijans into the famous Viṣṇu temple at Melkote in Karnāṭaka. The humanity and courage involved in this noble act are both highly remarkable and worthy of the enfranchising religious movement which attained its consummation through his work. After him, others carried the stream of Vaisnava thought in various ways into various parts of

this holy land of ours, and new forms of Vaiṣṇava faith came into existence under new conditions.

A high soul that completely turns to God and the service of humanity will not find anything interesting in this mundane world. His family life may be disrupted. If his wife is not sympathetic and understanding, she becomes an obstacle and he is compelled to take to *sannyās*. In fact, this is what exactly happened in Rāmānuja's life. A biographer narrates this episode :

“ On a certain morning, some poor people came to Rāmānuja and asked for food as they were hungry. Rāmānuja inquired of his wife if she had any food left. ‘ No, not so much as a grain of it ’, she said. Rāmānuja suspected her sincerity, entered the kitchen and examined the vessels and lo ! he found food hidden away. He called his wife, and angrily spoke to her thus : ‘ Art thou capable of this, that when hungry men are waiting at the door, thou shouldst lie ? Is there any worse manners than this vice, refusing food to those who come in dire need of it and a lie is added to the meanness ? O ! what a sin. ’

“ On another day, Rāmānuja, was out for his morning ablutions. His wife and the *Guru's* wife met at a well for drawing water. An altercation ensued between them as to the purity of the pots they held. As soon as his wife returned home, the *Guru* thought it wise to pack up immediately and left Kāñci for Śrīraṅgam. Rāmānuja returned home, and as usual went to visit his *Guru*, but he found him not. He asked the people of the place, to account for his sudden disappearance. They said : ‘ Sire, your lady and your *Guru's* lady had a quarrel near the well over a pot. The *Guru*, thinking that if he stayed longer under your roof, it might again give rise to unpleasantness, considered it prudent to leave the place forthwith. ’ Rāmānuja was white with rage on hearing this. He turned to his wife and said : ‘ Thrice art thou sinner. My *Guru* Kāñcīpūrṇa came and took his food under my roof and thou didst treat the very leaf from which he ate as unholy and polluting. This was thy first guilt. Hungry men came asking for food, thou didst deny it and thou didst lie. This was thy second guilt. And now thou didst have the audacity to pick a most unseemly quarrel with my venerable teacher's wife. This

is thy third and crowning crime. No more art thou fit to remain with me. Thou art a worldly woman, blind to spiritual interests. Take all this wealth, for that is thy meet. That is the stuff that well suits you. Well do the *Sāstras* say ; “ When house-keeping suits not, enter the monastery. For that is the true house where strangers and guests find a ready welcome”. But thou hast defiled my roof by thy unworthy conduct. It is proper therefore that thou shouldst return to where thou comest from’. So saying he sent her back to the home of her parents. Rāmānuja resolved to become a *sannyāsin*. ”

When we are talking about Rāmānuja’s philosophy, let us not forget the definition of a true Vaiṣṇava given by Narsi Mehta in his famous song, “*Vaiṣṇava Janato*”, which is quite in accordance with Rāmānuja’s teachings :

“ He is a Vaiṣṇava who feels for the suffering of another. ....

His heart is fixed on the Lord. whom he is restless to meet ; really his body is indeed a pilgrim’s garb.....

Says Narsi, verily he and his family shall cross the cycle of rebirth. ”

The best tribute that we can pay to Rāmānuja is to endeavour to become a true Vaiṣṇava and promote universal brotherhood, forgetting all differences arising out of caste, community, class, creed and status. Rāmānuja’s social philosophy, let us remember, is to create a classless and casteless society.

I have now great pleasure in inaugurating this Seminar.

---

## About Our Contributors

1. Prof. S. S. Raghavachar born at Melkote in Karnataka in 1913. Studied philosophy at the University of Mysore. Retired as Senior Professor and Head of the Post-graduate Department of Philosophy at Mysore in 1973. His works include "Introduction to the *Vedārtha-saṃgraha* of Rāmānuja", *Rāmānuja on the 'Gītā'*, *Rāmānuja on the Upaniṣads*, and English translations of *Viṣṇutattva-vinirṇaya* of Madhva, *Naiskarmya-siddhi* of Sureśvara and *Vedārtha saṃgraha* of Rāmānuja.

2. Dr. E J. Lott was born in 1934 in the United Kingdom in a farming family; studied at London and Lancaster Universities and obtained the M.Litt. and Ph.D. degrees. Taught Indian Religions at Andhra Christian Theological College, Guntur. Is at present Professor of Hinduism at United Theological College, Bangalore. His works include *God and the Universe in the Theology of Rāmānuja*, *Vedāntic Approaches to God* and two books in Telugu.

3. Prof. M. R. Sampatkumaran born at Madras in the year 1910 as the son of the distinguished scholar and professor, M. Rangacharya; he studied at the Hindu High School, and the Presidency College, Triplicane where he took his M.A. (Hons.) degree in English Literature. He has translated into English the *Gītā-bhāṣya* of Sri Rāmānuja and written two small monographs on Rāma and Kṛiṣṇa as world teachers. He has edited and brought out in three volumes the lectures on *Bhagavadgītā* delivered by his father, and in three volumes the most authentic English translation by his father of the *Sri-Bhāṣya* of Rāmānuja. He has been for several years

publishing the *Educational Review*, a monthly, now in its eighty-fifth year of publication. He is also the Editor of *Śrī Rāmānuja Vāṇi*, a quarterly journal in English of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, published by Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, Madras and Associate Editor of *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika*, Madras.

4. Dr. Raghunath Safaya, M.A., Ph.D. He has been in the Educational Service of the Govt. of India and is presently the Principal, Govt. College of Education, Chandigarh. He has written *Indian Psychology* and some books on Sanskrit Education.

5. Dr. J. Parthasarathy, born in 1915, took his M.A. in English, Tamil and Hindi. Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Agra. He has held teaching posts in English, Linguistics and Tamil at various places and is now Director of Tamil, Sanskrit and other Indian Languages Institute, Madras. He has written several monographs in English, Tamil and Hindi, specialising in Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism and the Āzhvārs, including a volume of criticism in Tamil and a literary appreciation of *Tiruvāymozhi*.

6. Dr. V. Varadachari, the son of a distinguished Sanskrit scholar, was Professor of Sanskrit, Sri Venkateswara University Tirupati. After retirement he is working in Institut Français D'Indologie, Pondicherry. His book *Agamas and South Indian Vaiṣṇavism* is under print. Has contributed several papers to learned periodicals. Has translated and edited with notes *Yatirājajavaibhavam* of Āndhrapūrṇa.

7. Dr. K. V. Raman studied in the Madras Christian College and the Delhi School of Archaeology. Took his M.Litt. and Ph.D. from the University of Madras. His theses, 'The Early History of Madras Region' and 'Śrī Varadarājaswāmi

Temple, Kāñci” have been published. Was awarded the UNESCO Regional Award for 1971—72 for outstanding work in Archaeology. Now Professor and Head of the Department of Archaeology, of University Madras.

8. Dr. R. N. Sampath ; Born in 1928, graduated from the Presidency College, Madras, taking his B.A. (Hons.) and winning three medals from the University ; Ph.D. from the Karnataka University, Dharwar. Was the Curator, Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras; now Professor and Head of the Post-graduate Dept. of Sanskrit in the Presidency College, Madras.

9. Dr. G. Damodaran ; Born in 1923 in Coimbatore Dt. of Tamil Nadu. Had his schooling in Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Coimbatore and higher education in the Rajah's College of Tamil and Sanskrit Studies, Tiruvaiyaru, Thanjavur Dt. Obtained the MA., M.Litt. and Ph.D. degrees and also Diploma in Linguistics. Was awarded the King George V Memorial prize of Rs. 1000/- in 1944 for obtaining the first rank in the Vidwan exmaination of the University of Madras. At present Professor and Head of Dept. of Tamil, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. Has published seven books in Tamil specially on Tamil grammar and Śrīvaiṣṇava religion including a critical study of *Ācārya Hṛdayam* and a literary appreciation of *Tiruvāymoḻi*.

10. Prof. K. A. Manavalan : Born in 1926 at Śrīperumbūdūr, Early education in Śrīperumbūdūr Sanskrit College, and became Śīromaṇi (Vyakaraṇa) of University of Madras. B.O.L. (Sanskrit) of Osmania University, Hyderabad and M.A. in Tamil of the University of Madras. Serving as Professor of Tamil, D. G. Vaishnava College, Madras. Has written in Tamil ‘Life of Sri Rāmānuja’ and ‘Lives of the Āzhvārs’.



11. Dr. K. K. A. Venkatachari: Born in 1930 at Śrīperumbūdūr. Belongs to a traditional *acārya-puruṣa* family, claiming direct descent from Mudaliyāṇḍān, nephew of Śrī Rāmānuja. Had early education in Śrīperumbūdūr Sanskrit College. Śiromaṇi in Sanskrit and Vidwān in Tamil of University of Madras; B.O.L. of Osmania University, Hyderabad; Sahitya Ratna (Hindi) of Allāhabad University; Ph.D. of Utrecht University (Denmark, under Prof. J. Gonda); now working as Founder-Director, Ananthāchārya Indological Research Institute, Bombay; published 'Maṇipravāla Literature of Śrīvaiṣṇava Āchāryas'.

12. Dr. P. K. Sundaram, Professor, Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras. *Advaita Epistemology*, Word Index to Saṅkara's *Brahma-Sūtrabhāṣya*, *Some Philosophical Concepts of 'Puranānūṣu'*, *Ātma-bodha* of Saṅkara and *Vedānta Sāra* of Sadānanda are among the books written by him. He is also Director, the C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar Foundation and Editor, 'Voice of Sāmanvaya', the organ of the Foundation.

13. Dr. R. Balasubramanian: Born in 1929 took his Ph.D. in 1961 and the D.Litt. in 1975 from the University of Madras. Was Fulbright & Smity-Mundt Scholar, Stanford University U.S.A. in 1961—62. He is presently Director, Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study of Philosophy, University of Madras. *Advaita Vedānta*, *Mysticism of Poigai Āzhvār* and *Some Problems in the Epistemology and Metaphysics of Rāmānuja* are among his publications.

THE ACADEMY OF HINDU RESEARCH  
BELLARY DISTRICT  
KARNATAKA STATE

17953

# Sri Ramanuja Vedanta Centre (Regd.)

M A D R A S .



## GOVERNING BODY

### *President :*

Ubhaya Vedānta Vidwān Sri Tirukkallam  
Narasimharaghavacharya, Madras.

### *Vice-Presidents :*

Ubhaya Vedānta Vidwān Sri K. Varadacharya, Madras.  
N. Krishnaswamy Reddy, Justice (Retired), Madras.  
M. A. Lakshmi Thathacharya, Bangalore.  
Dr. S. S. Jayaram, Bangalore.

### *Secretaries :*

Vimala Ramanujan.  
M. N. Parthasarathy.

### *Members :*

Y. G. Doraisami.  
R. Parthasarathy.  
T. R. S. Raghavan.  
Dr. M. A. Ramaswamy, Brig. (Retd.)  
M. D. Ramaswamy  
M. R. Sampatkumaran.  
K. R. Srinivasachari.  
M. C. Sreenivasan.

---

**SRIPERUMBUDUR SANSKRIT COLLEGE**  
**MANAGING COMMITTEE.**

*President :*

C. Ethiraj.

*Members :*

Pathalam Chandriah

V. R. Bhaktavatsalam

Vummidi Ramiah Chetty

Nathella Audikesavalu Gupta

Dr. T. N. Srinivasan

C. Venkatachalam.

V. Anandakrishna Chetty

*Hon. Correspondent :*

M. Nammalwar Chetty.



**All India Seminar on Sri Ramanuja, 1979**

**SEMINAR COMMITTEE**

*President :*

N. Krishnaswamy Reddy, Justice (Retd.)

*Vice-Presidents :*

C. Ethiraj, B.Com.

Y. G. Doraisami, M.Sc.

*Secretaries :*

R. N. Sampath, M.A., Ph.D.

M. N. Parthasarathy, M.A.

K. A. Manavalan, M.A., B.O.L.

*Members :*

C. Jagannathachari, M.A.

Nathella Audikesavalu Gupta.

K. V. Raman, M.A., M.Litt., Ph.D.

T. R. S. Raghavan, M.A.

M. R. Sampatkumaran, M.A.

M. C. Sreenivasan, G.D.A., R.A.

